

Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.

Membership Structure Review

Final Report

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By:

PRAXIS

RESEARCH | STRATEGY | RESULTS

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Executive Summary

SYSI engaged Praxis Consulting (Praxis) to conduct a thorough organizational membership structure review. The purpose of the process was to identify the needs of the membership and understand what SYSI can do to better support its membership. Recently, SYSI had experienced a decline in soccer registration numbers. Their membership was looking to understand the root cause(s) and develop solutions to build capacity and membership.

Praxis developed a consultation process that included:

- Interjurisdictional and Intersport Interviews
- Stakeholder Group Interviews
- Online Survey
- Focus Group
- Stakeholder Collaboration Session

Trends in Sport and Soccer

Through consultations with Zone Organizations, the City of Saskatoon, as well as inter-jurisdictional and inter-sport organizations, the following trends were identified in sport and soccer:

- An increased focus on Long-Term Player Development Framework
- An increasing number of academies appearing in Saskatoon and other regions
- Players switching clubs based on age and level of competition
- Decreased number of volunteers
- Participation levels highly correlated with success of professional sport teams
- An increased focus on safety education
- Some organizations encourage children to focus on only one sport, while others encourage multisport athletes
- An increase in costs to play
- Changing demographics as a result of increased immigration
- An increase in sports for youth from which to chose

Player Characteristics

Through an online survey sent to players/parents, as well as through a player focus group, the following player characteristics were identified:

- The dominant player profile characteristics are players who play soccer in both seasons and do not play other sports (39.38%).
- The primary influence for players is enjoyment of the sport.
- There is an even breakdown of players that play recreation vs. competitive soccer.
- The primary reasons why players begin to play soccer is because it is inexpensive and easy to learn at a young age.

Current State

Throughout the engagement, a number of themes surfaced regarding the current state of soccer in Saskatoon. These themes are included below.

- The high likelihood (81.26%) of respondents to continue participation in soccer suggests a degree of loyalty in the current state.
- Looking at the primary reasons a player may discontinue participation suggests that a retention strategy should focus on creating a high-quality soccer experience but remain conscious of price sensitivity to rising soccer fees.
- Low participation was viewed as a vicious cycle by stakeholder organizations, as low participation impacts players willingness to continue playing.
- When looking at an appropriate structure for the growth of soccer, an important principle (as identified by the players/parents) will be the opportunity to play with players of a similar skill set. This includes a clear development continuum for all skillsets and ambitions.
- The areas of success identified by the stakeholder organizations should not be downplayed as they are critical to the success of soccer in Saskatoon.
- The primary areas for improvement identified by the stakeholder organizations (stronger governance and recreational opportunity) must be a consideration in the new membership structure of soccer in Saskatoon.

Vision for the Future & Critical Success Factors

During the individual stakeholder organization interviews, stakeholders were asked to define their vision for soccer in Saskatoon. The following are the themes of responses:

- Prioritize the player – act in the best interest of the player
- A clear sport development continuum for U5 through to adult
- A fun program that allows athletes to play (1) with friends and (2) at a desired level of competition
- An athlete centred high performance system aligned with the LTPD model
- A well functioning league including adult leagues
- Access to facilities both indoor and outdoor - Consistent practice schedules at reasonable times
- Sufficient numbers of qualified coaches supported by a city-wide coaches training program
- Sufficient marketing of the soccer across the city
- Clear and consistent priorities for the Saskatoon soccer system
- Removal of barriers to cooperation – e.g., automatic zone re-alignment, anti-poaching rules, removal of zone boundaries, allow older athletes to play together.
- Inclusion of the school system in the soccer development model
- Removal of financial barriers to participate

To ensure the above vision is achievable, stakeholder organizations identified the following as criteria for success:

- Athletes have fun – play with their friends, play at the desired level
- Athletes have a clear line of site to desired level of development – development continuum
- Athletes have the opportunity to play at the level of soccer they desire

- Clear structure
- Sufficient number of competent, trained coaches
- Sufficient number of competent, trained officials
- Access to facilities
- Access to league play
- Affordability
- System supports a collaborative and athlete centred approach

Required Programs and Supports

In the online surveys, as well as during the player focus group, participants were asked to think about what kind of programs and services are important to an effective soccer system in Saskatoon. The key themes that arose are described below.

- There is strong support for quality and appropriate competition.
- Stakeholder organizations identified the continued need for appropriate opportunity to play recreational soccer, as well as the availability for facilities (both indoor and outdoor) in players' neighbourhoods.
- Focus group participants stress the importance of quality coaching as it sets the foundation for high quality competition, as well as to have increased access to proper facilities close to their home community.
- Mention was made by some focus group participants that the evaluation process is not always perceived to be fair, i.e., some players must attend the evaluations, while others do not. This is a potential reputational concern for SYSI.

Organizational Roles

When asked to think about organizational roles in the delivery of the services mentioned above, the following key themes surfaced:

- The role of recreational soccer programming is that of Community Associations
- The role of player development and competitive soccer programming is that of Zone associations
- The role of volunteer development is that of SYSI
- The promotion of soccer and coaching development could potentially be a shared role between Zone Associations and SYSI
- The data collected from stakeholder organizations demonstrates the belief that Community Associations should program for U7 and younger and that Zone associations should program for U11 and older. Almost two thirds (62.50%) of stakeholder organizations believe that both Community and Zone associations should program for U9.
- Clear roles and responsibilities for associations should be established by SYSI to make communication of the structure as simple as possible.

Zone Structure

Players/parents and stakeholder organizations were both asked if they believe the requirement for players to play in their geographical location should continue. The average response of both groups were slightly above neutral towards agreement:

- Player/parent respondents (average response: 3.31/5)
- Stakeholder organizations (average response: 3.12)

The players/parents who responded positively to the zone rule continuing (between 3 and 5 inclusive), were asked why zones should exist. The three responses that were above 50% included:

- Balanced competition in league play
- Creates relationship building between community associations and zones
- Every player has a zone they belong to (sense of belonging regardless of area)

Similarly, the player/parent who responded negatively (1 and 2 inclusive), were asked why zones should not exist. The two reasons selected by more than 50% of the respondents were:

- To allow for players to play with a similar skill set found in other zones
- To encourage clubs to offer stronger products and services.

When asked what the optimal number of geographical zones would be, almost half (45.10%) of players/parents suggested more, with 44.44% of stakeholder organizations suggested the same amount.

Some Key alternative structures identified were: a club model, distinct recreation and competitive streams, Hybrid zone and club model dependent on recreation/competitive streams and many others.

Among the alternatives structures there were also principles for consideration identified. These included: equity and fairness, limiting travel time, encouraging play with friends, ability to play at a desired level (competitive vs. recreational), ability to play with quality coaches, select desired services.

Inter-jurisdictional and Inter-sport Structures

Through consultations with various athletic organizations in Saskatoon and across Canada, the following themes were found:

- Half of the organizations operate under a club model, while the other half operate under a zone model.
- In most cases, the members are the players; however, in some, the members are the clubs and/or community associations.
- All have policy boards with anywhere from 5-14 board members.
- Four organizations have competency-based boards, and the remaining two are made up of parents and players.

Recommendations

The sport of soccer in Saskatoon is facing many challenges. Participant numbers are declining while the number of programming options within and outside of the sport are increasing. On a provincial and

national level, the sport is maturing administratively (e.g., club licensing) while resources for professional administration and volunteers are declining. Further, there is an ongoing desire to increase the development of players while many players are simply looking for recreational and/or lifelong participation. SYSI continues to be challenged to respond to these ongoing dynamics and to serve diverse communities of interest. Below are recommended next steps for SYSI to take to help address these challenges.

1. Enhance Management of Communication and Change
2. Open Zone Boundaries for Older Athletes
3. Better Transition from Community Association Soccer to Zone Play
4. Enhanced Recreational Programming
5. Increased Promotion of Soccer in Saskatoon

Introduction

Project Background

Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. (SYSI) is the non-profit governing body for youth soccer in Saskatoon as recognized by the Saskatchewan Soccer Association, the Canadian Soccer Association, CONCACAF, and FIFA. SYSI has a membership base that includes:

- Five Member Zone Organizations;
- Thirty-two Community Associations; and,
- One Academy Associate Member.

The Saskatoon soccer landscape is changing as academies and other non-SYSI soccer clubs are establishing. Recently, SYSI had experienced a decline in soccer registration numbers. Their membership was looking to understand the root cause(s) and develop solutions to build capacity and membership. One of the potential solutions being considered was a renewed membership structure, as the current 'zone' membership structure presents an opportunity for SYSI to accommodate new soccer entities and build the brand of soccer in Saskatoon.

SYSI engaged Praxis Consulting (Praxis) to conduct a thorough organizational membership structure review. The purpose of the process was to identify the needs of the membership and understand what SYSI can do to better support its membership.

Praxis designed a consultation process that included:

- Interjurisdictional and Intersport Interviews
- Stakeholder Group Interviews
- Online Survey
- Focus Group
- Stakeholder Collaboration Session

Interjurisdictional and Intersport Interviews Approach

The objective of the interjurisdictional and Intersport Interviews were to understand what membership models are being utilized in sport and their success in the jurisdiction.

For this project we held 30-60 minute telephone consultations with:

- Kitchener Soccer Club
- Prince Edward Island Soccer
- Winnipeg Youth Soccer Association
- Calgary Minor Soccer Association
- Saskatoon Minor Football
- Saskatoon Minor Hockey

The questionnaire utilized in the consultations can be found in Appendix 1.

Stakeholder Group Interviews

To gather stakeholder specific qualitative information, Praxis conducted individual interview sessions with:

- SUSC Technical Director and Zone Board Representatives
- Hollandia Technical Director and Zone Board Representatives
- Aurora Technical Director and Zone Board Representatives
- Lakewood Technical Director and Zone Board Representatives
- Eastside Technical Director and Zone Board Representatives
- City of Saskatoon Community Consultants

The agenda used during the zone sessions can be found in Appendix 2. The agenda used for the City of Saskatoon session can be found in Appendix 3.

Online Survey Approach

This report consists of data collected from two surveys:

1. Stakeholder Organization Survey
2. Players and Parents Survey

Stakeholder Organization Survey

This survey was distributed by Praxis, emailed to 62 of SYSI's stakeholder organizations. Twenty-five organizations chose to fully respond.

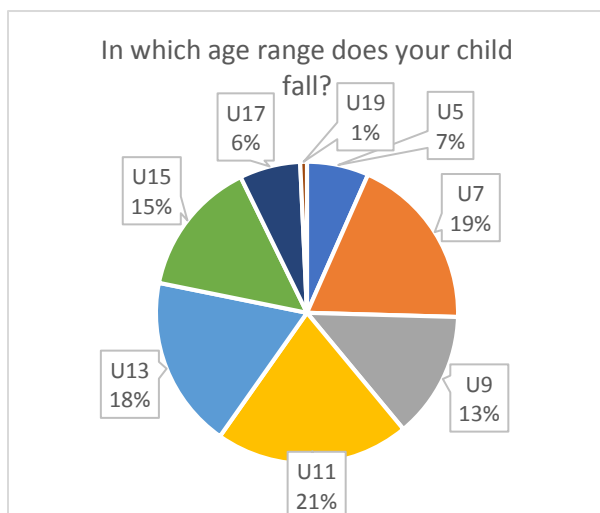
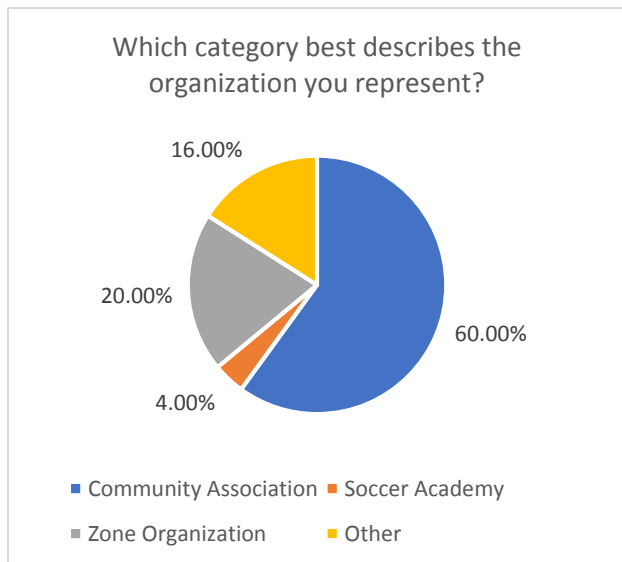
Participation in the survey included Community Associations (15 responses), Zone Organizations (5 responses), Academies (1 responses), and others (4 responses).

The survey was open for respondents from May 25th – June 5th (inclusive)

Players and Parents Survey

This survey was distributed by SYSI to their 2018 outdoor season and the 2017-2018 indoor season player and parent database. This included 6,640 email addresses. Ninety-three chose to fully respond.

Of those who responded 97.28% were parents of players, 2.72% were players. Age groups of players from U5 to U19 were represented.



The players and parents survey sample aligned well with actual distribution of players in the city, with survey distribution approximating actual zone distribution within one to three percentage points.

The survey was open for respondents from May 25th – June 5th (inclusive).

Questionnaires for both surveys can be found in Appendix 4.

Limitations

Because respondents self-selected to contribute their opinion and were not randomly selected as they are for the public opinion poll, the survey results technically constitute a non-probability sample and a margin of sampling error should not be calculated or quoted.

Focus Group Approach

Praxis conducted a focus group session on June 2, 2018 with a randomly selected cross section of Saskatoon youth soccer players regarding their perceptions of what's important to them in terms of playing soccer in Saskatoon and SYSI's membership structure. Focus groups involve bringing members of a target segment together with an objective moderator to discuss perceptions that add depth to what we find with quantitative survey surveys research.

The focus group session contained eight participants made up of a cross-section of SYSI soccer players in the <17 and <19 age segments. It was held in a meeting room at the SaskTel Sport Centre. The session began with a general introduction and explanation from the moderator about how focus groups work, including:

- the idea that discussions are exploratory; that there are no right or wrong answers, just opinions, perceptions and what each player thinks based on their own experiences;
- the importance of expressing individual opinions and frank discussion, even if it is different than what other players in the room are saying; and
- assurances of participant confidentiality and that opinions are aggregated, not attributed to individuals, and that names of people participating in the focus group discussions are not shared or attached to written summary.

The moderator guide for the focus group can be found in appendix 5.

Stakeholder Collaboration Session Approach

On September 22, 2018, Praxis conducted a session with representatives from various stakeholder groups. Approximately thirty-five individuals were in attendance, and the following stakeholder groups were represented:

- Aurora Soccer
- Astra Soccer Academy
- Eastside Youth Soccer Association
- Hollandia Soccer Club
- Lakewood Soccer
- Saskatchewan Soccer Association (observer)
- Saskatoon Adult Soccer
- Saskatoon Soccer Centre

- Saskatoon United Soccer Club
- Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc
- Wildwood Community Association

The session included a mix of small and large group discussions, and had the following high-level objectives:

- Review consultation findings
- Determine implications of status quo
- Establish perspective on a common vision for soccer in Saskatoon
- Determine critical success factors for effective soccer delivery in Saskatoon
- Evaluate delivery system options
- Determine roles of key delivery agents
- Discuss key challenges
- Inform the governance of the SYSI

The agenda for the stakeholder session can be found in Appendix 6.

Findings

The findings in this report have been broken down into the following sections:

- Trends in Sport and Soccer
- Player Characteristics
- Current State
- Vision of the Future
- Required Programs and Supports
- Organizational Roles
- Zone Structure
- Inter-jurisdictional and Inter-sport Structures

Trends in Sport and Soccer

The trends identified in this section are representative of trends identified by the Zone Organizations, City of Saskatoon, as well as inter-jurisdictional and inter-sport organizations.

Trends in Sport

Below are the trends identified to be impacting sport.

Long-Term Athlete Development Framework - Policies and procedures are typically dictated by a provincial body, who may choose to follow the Canadian framework set out by Sport for Life. This framework emphasizes the need for children, youth and adults to be participating in the right level of activity at the right stage in their life.

Academies – Academies are appearing in Saskatoon as well as in other regions, offering opportunities for players to increase their skills and abilities in a competitive environment.

Best Practice: One jurisdiction's response was to develop academies within their club to keep pace with the academies that are appearing in the region.

Competitive Play – With a club model, players will change clubs based on age and level of play. Players may choose to play for a more or less competitive club if the option is available.

Volunteerism – Volunteer recruitment has become more difficult. Parents have an expectation that they do not need to volunteer as they are already paying for a service.

Best Practices:

Saskatoon Football Developed an application to assist volunteer coaches by providing practice drills and practice plans.

Showing appreciation for volunteers with a volunteer appreciation night, t-shirts, hats, etc and providing coaches with certification.

Success of Sports – Success of sports teams (Rush, Blue Jays, Riders, Canadian Women's Soccer Team, White Caps, etc.) impact participation in that sport.

Safety Concerns – Head injuries and concussions are common in many sports. Parents must be educated on the safety risks associated with the sports their children play.

Theory of Elitism – At a young age, some children are asked to focus on only one sport if they excel.

Best Practice: We limit the number of practices not to burn the kids out. We encourage participation in multiple sports. (non-soccer organization)

Push for Multisport – Rather than placing all focus on one sport, both football and hockey encourage multisport players at a young age. Canada soccer is said to be supporting the multi-sport concept.

Increasing costs to play – Large, complex facilities increase the cost to play. It is important to minimize the cost to the player and find opportunities to subsidize the sport. A decline in government funding and corporate support plays into this as well.

Best Practice: Promote the sport - sing the successes as loud as you can.

Changing Demographics – Canada has seen an influx in immigrants from countries where soccer is the most popular sport.

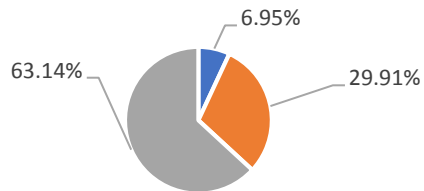
More Sports Available – Emergence of football, ball hockey, lacrosse, etc. The local organizations responsible for these sports are perceived to market the sports well.

Player Characteristics

Almost two thirds (63.14%) of player/parent respondents reported having played in both the indoor and outdoor season over the past year. Twenty-nine percent (29.91%) only played in the outdoor season, with the remaining 6.95% only playing in the indoor season.

Only 40.99% of respondents report them or their child playing competitive sports other than soccer. Over a quarter of respondents (27.69%) playing during the soccer season and the remaining 13.29% playing outside of the soccer season.

Which seasons did you or your child play in the past year?



■ Indoor ■ Outdoor ■ Both Indoor and outdoor

Do you or your child play competitive sports other than soccer?



■ No ■ Play other sports during soccer season ■ Play other sports outside of soccer season

About 50 Percent (52.97%) of respondents participate in recreational soccer, an equal amount participates in competitive soccer. Only 19.23% participate in High Performance. The themes of 'other' include academy, playing with friends, for health/fitness, and for fun.

Player Focus Group participants started playing at young age through Community Associations as Timbits illustrating the importance of community association and community involvement in growing soccer.

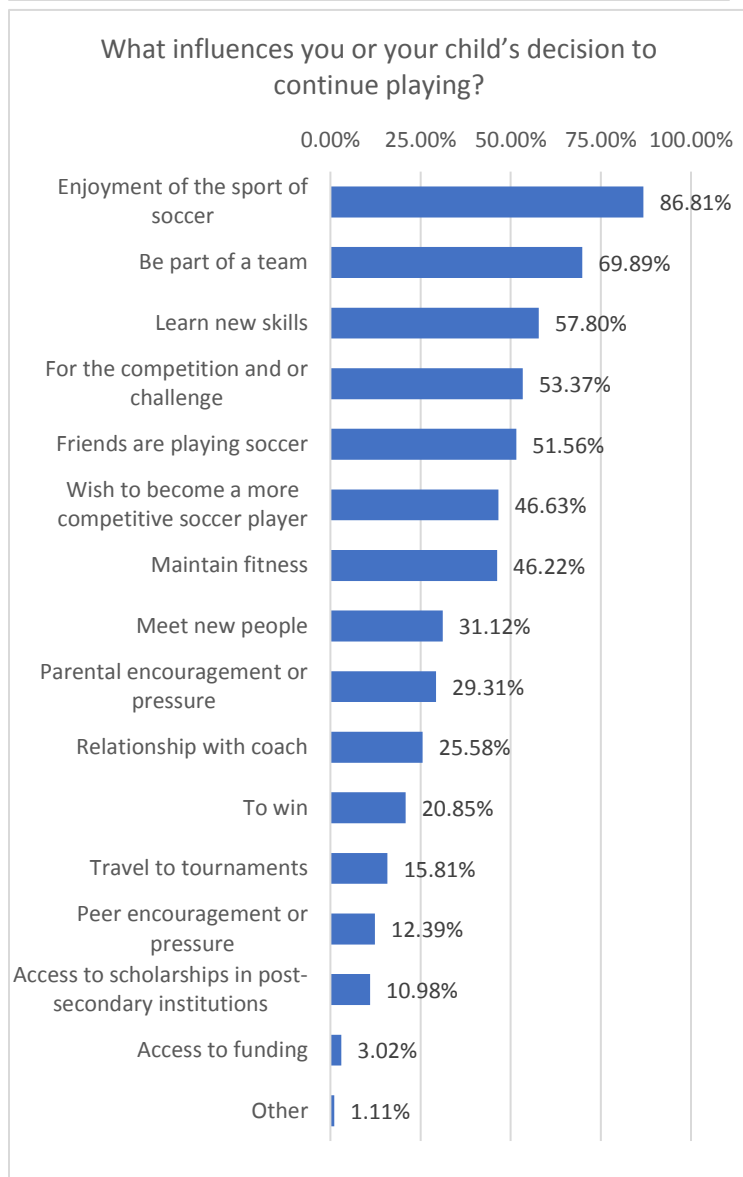
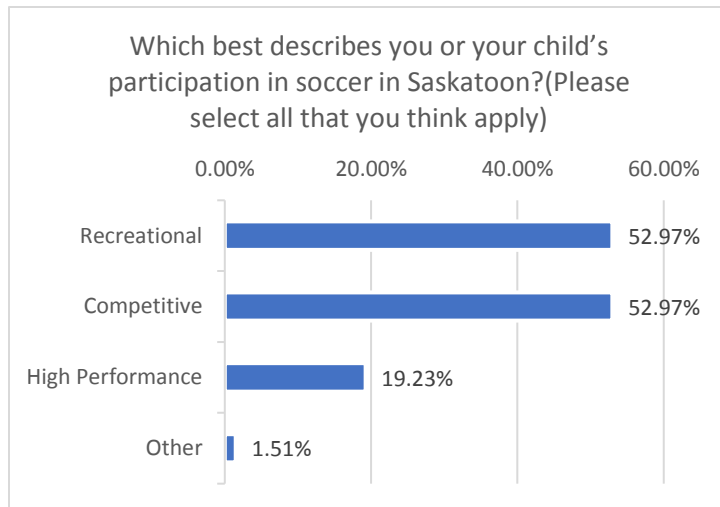
Focus Group participants highlighted that they chose soccer as it was Inexpensive to play, easy to learn, and many of their parents also played soccer.

The primary influences for survey respondents to continue playing soccer include:

- Enjoyment of the sport of soccer (Reported by 86.81% of respondents)
- Being part of a team (Reported by 69.89% of respondents)
- Learning new skills (Reported by 57.80% of respondents)

Focus group participants said that they continue to play for the social aspect of the sport. They enjoy being part of a team as there are many friends they have grown up playing soccer with and against.

Focus group participants also stated that soccer has a happy medium of good coaching, skill development and fun. There is not as much pressure in soccer as with some other sports.



Consultant Insights

- The dominant player profile characteristics are players who play soccer in both seasons and do not play other sports (39.38%). Please see below table.
- The primary influence for players is enjoyment of the sport.
- The even breakdown of participation based on recreation vs. competitive soccer should be noted during planning exercises as to not devote more emphasis on one or the other.
- It is important to account for the reasons why players begin to play; soccer is inexpensive, easy to learn at a young age.

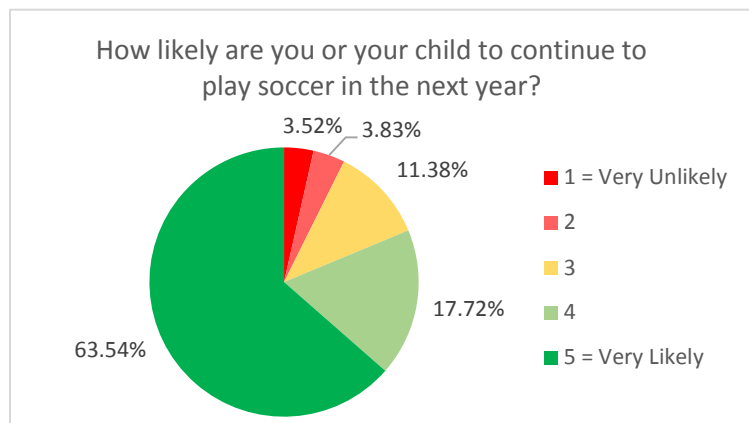
Cross tabulation of players who play other sports and in which season they play soccer		Play Other Sports		
		No	Play other sports during season	Play other sports outside of season
Season of Participation	Outdoor	16.41%	5.64%	7.96%
	Indoor	3.22%	2.22%	1.51%
	Both Indoor and outdoor	39.38%	19.74%	3.93%

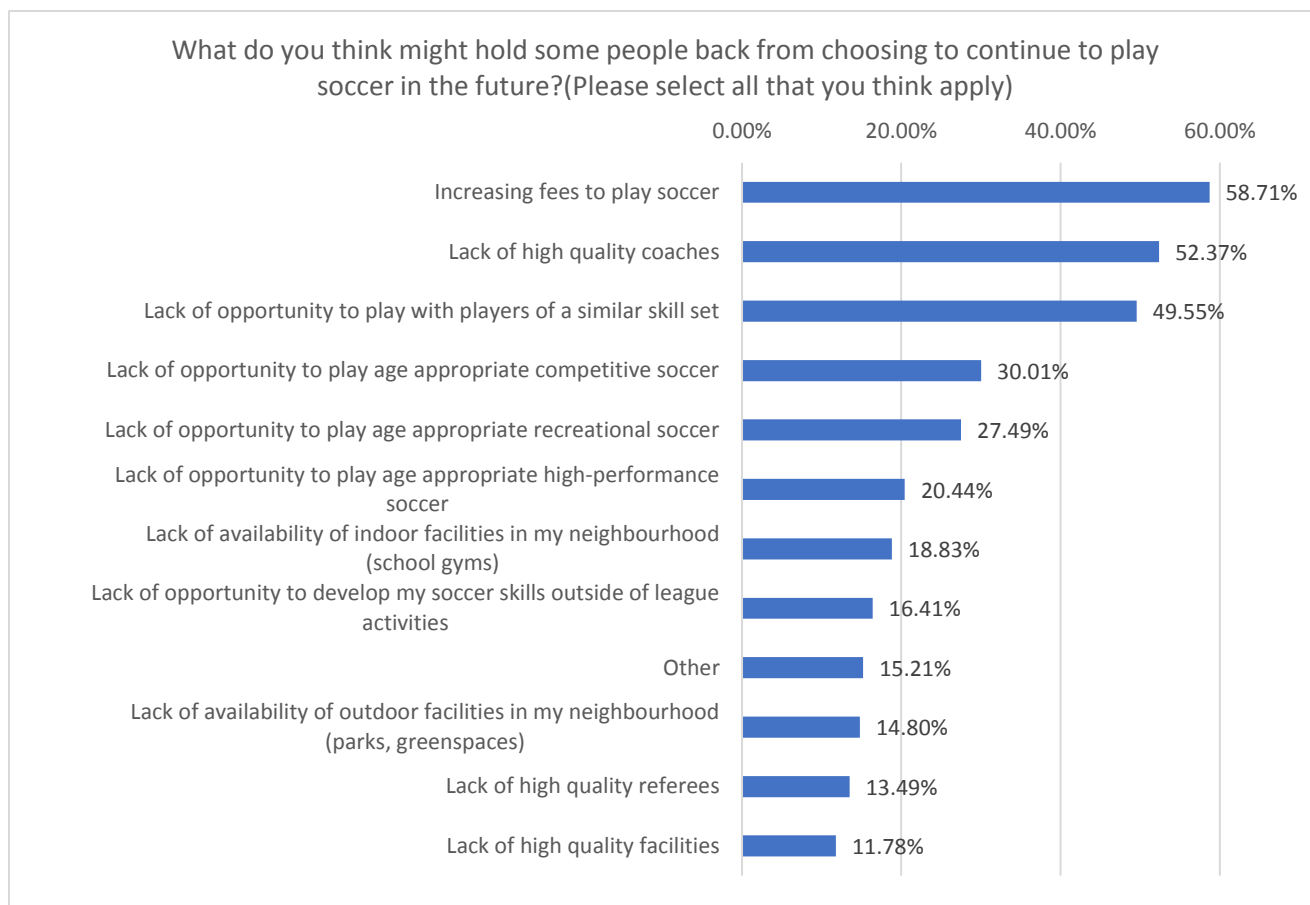
Current State

Overall, most parent/player respondents indicate that players are very likely to return, with 81.26% indicating that they or their child are likely or very likely to return. Only 7.35% indicate they are unlikely or very unlikely to return.

When asked what reasons a player may not play soccer in the future, the primary responses were:

- Increasing soccer fees (Reported by 58.71% of respondents)
- Lack of high quality coaches (Reported by 52.37% of respondents)
- Lack of opportunity to play with players of similar skill set (Reported 49.55%)





**Other responses can be found in Appendix 7*

Focus group participants suggested that some children stop playing soccer as there is a stigma attached to soccer. (e.g., ‘that soccer is not a real sport like hockey or baseball’). Participants also identified that players are having to make choices as they age. Coaches discourage or will not allow potential elite players to participate in other sports or other large time commitments.

Stakeholder interviews and sessions identified the following as current trends identified to be impacting participation in SYSI Soccer.

Increasing competition for players

- Touch football
- Ball hockey
- Lacrosse
- Year-round hockey

Players being spread over increasing number of soccer options

- Academies participating in league play
- Increasing popularity of Futsal
- SSA high performance program

Increasing drop-out rates - attributed to the following perceptions:

- Lack of smooth transition from community association program to Zone programs and/or intimidation of zone program
- Increasing pressure on younger athletes to specialize
- Soccer politics/ lack of coordination between systems
- Poaching players
- Inability to play with peers or for desired coach due to boundaries
- Insufficient numbers to field a team
- Lack of quality coaches at the introductory level
- Lack of opportunities for life long participation
- Lack of recreational opportunities at a younger age
- Increasing cost of participation – no longer a low-cost sport alternative

When the stakeholder organizations were asked what was working well in the delivery of soccer programming the primary themes were: scheduling and league management, promotion and marketing of the sport, as well as SYSI supporting the delivery at various levels.

Key Themes of “In your opinion, what is working well in the delivery of soccer programming in Saskatoon? (Please list your top 3)”	
Fun and exercise for kids	Scheduling and League management
SYSI as governing body providing guidance to Community Associations	Facility management
SYSI Working with Tim Horton's to provide uniforms	Promotion/marketing
Coaching Clinics	Use of futsal
Engagement through committees	Diverse programs
Improved ability to listen and communicate	Preparing incoming coordinators
Collaboration between zones	Referee development

When the stakeholder organizations were asked what was not working well in the delivery of soccer programming the primary themes were: a lack of leadership and governance for the zones and community associations and a high degree of focus on competitive soccer programming vs. recreational programming.

Key Themes of “In your opinion, what is not working well in the delivery of soccer programming in Saskatoon? (Please list your top 3)”	
Too much focus on encouraging children into the competitive leagues.	Higher age group leagues are struggling for numbers
Lack of consistency year to year (fees, age groupings).	Leadership and governance for the zones and community associations (poaching, boundaries)
High fees for younger ages	Volunteer/coach recruitment
Lack of support in placing players on teams	Ability to enable kids to playing recreational soccer.
Lack of volunteer coaches due to stringent requirements	The quality of programming varies from zone to zone

Lack of effective communication between organizations

During stakeholder organization interviews, the following key issues were reported.

Zone boundaries

- Insufficient number of athletes within zones to make teams
- Politics between zones
- Lack of adherence to zone boundaries – by athletes and coaches
- Imbalance of player numbers between zones
- Does not encourage club excellence – zones have a monopoly on players

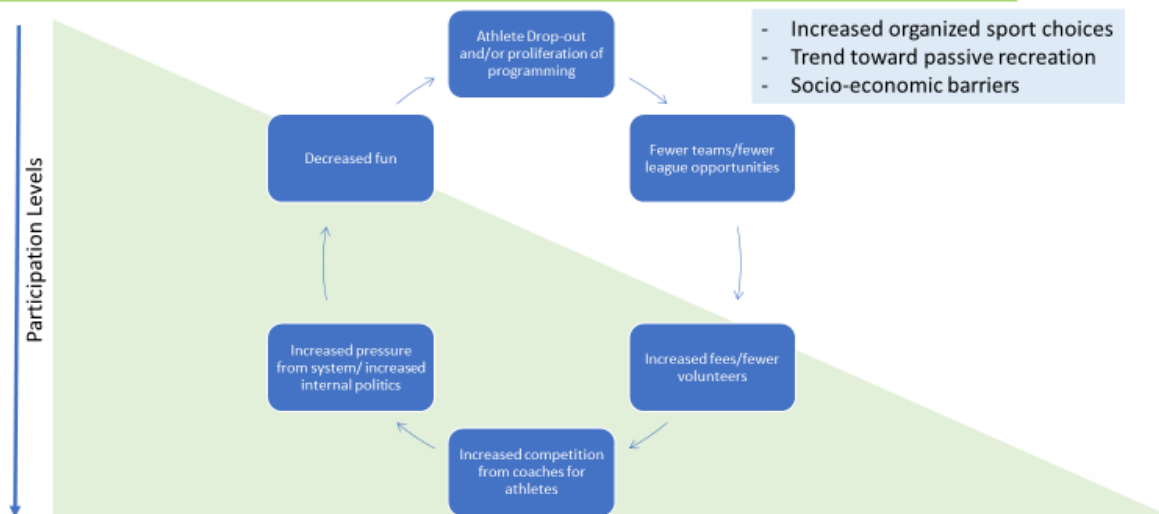
Saskatoon sport development continuum – child through to adult

- Coordination of programs and deliverers (Community Associations, zones, academies, Futsol, SSA, etc.)
- Clear line of sight for athletes
- Ability to participate at desired level of competition
- Lack of clarity between Community Associations and Zones regarding responsibility for competitive, high performance, recreation programming, and for which age groups.

Consultant Insights

- The high likelihood (81.26%) of respondents to continue participation in soccer suggests a degree of loyalty in the current state.
- Looking at the primary reasons a player may discontinue participation suggests that a retention strategy should focus on creating a high-quality soccer experience but remain conscious of price sensitivity to rising soccer fees.
- Low participation was viewed as a vicious cycle by stakeholder organizations, as low participation impacts players willingness to continue playing.
- When looking at an appropriate structure for the growth of soccer, an important principle (as identified by the players/parents) will be the opportunity to play with players of a similar skill set. This includes a clear development continuum for all skillsets and ambitions.
- The areas of success identified by the stakeholder organizations should not be downplayed as they are critical to the success of soccer in Saskatoon.
- The primary areas for improvement identified by the stakeholder organizations (stronger governance and recreational opportunity) must be a consideration in the new membership structure of soccer in Saskatoon.

A Cycle of Declining Participation Levels



Vision of the Future

Vision for Soccer in Saskatoon

During the individual stakeholder organization interviews, stakeholders were asked to define their vision for soccer in Saskatoon. The following are the themes of responses:

- Prioritize the player – act in the best interest of the player
- A clear sport development continuum for U5 through to adult
- A fun program that allows athletes to play (1) with friends and (2) at a desired level of competition
- An athlete centred high performance system aligned with the LTPD model
- A well functioning league including adult leagues
- Access to facilities both indoor and outdoor - Consistent practice schedules at reasonable times
- Sufficient numbers of qualified coaches supported by a city-wide coaches training program
- Sufficient marketing of the soccer across the city
- Clear and consistent priorities for the Saskatoon soccer system
- Removal of barriers to cooperation – e.g., automatic zone re-alignment, anti-poaching rules, removal of zone boundaries, allow older athletes to play together.
- Inclusion of the school system in the soccer development model
- Removal of financial barriers to participate

Critical Success Factors

To ensure the above vision is achievable, stakeholder organizations identified the following as criteria for success:

- Athletes have fun – play with their friends, play at the desired level

- Athletes have a clear line of site to desired level of development – development continuum
- Athletes have the opportunity to play at the level of soccer they desire
- Clear structure
- Sufficient number of competent, trained coaches
- Sufficient number of competent, trained officials
- Access to facilities
- Access to league play
- Affordability
- System supports a collaborative and athlete centred approach

Required Programs and Supports

Both player/parent and stakeholder organization respondents were asked to identify what supports/programs are important to an effective soccer system in Saskatoon. The supports player/parent respondents identified as most important were:

- High quality coaches (Mean Response: 4.41/5)
- Availability of outdoor facilities in my neighbourhood (Mean Response: 4.11)
- Opportunity to play age appropriate competitive soccer (Mean Response: 4.01)

Stakeholder organizations identified the most important aspects to be:

- Opportunity to play age appropriate recreational soccer (Mean Response: 4.38)
- Availability of outdoor facilities in my neighbourhood (Mean Response: 4.21)
- Availability of indoor facilities in my neighbourhood (Mean Response: 4.13)

What types of supports/programs do you believe are most important for an effective soccer system in Saskatoon?

Please rate each aspect on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = Very Unimportant and 5 = Very Important

Support/Program	Players/ Parents Mean Response	Stakeholders Mean Response
High quality coaches	4.41	3.96
Availability of outdoor facilities in my neighbourhood (parks, greenspaces)	4.11	4.21
Opportunity to play age appropriate competitive soccer	4.01	3.67
Opportunity to play age appropriate recreational soccer	3.99	4.38
High quality facilities	3.89	3.38
Opportunity to play soccer all year	3.78	3.54
High quality referees	3.75	3.29
Availability of indoor facilities in my neighbourhood (school gyms)	3.69	4.13
Opportunity to develop my soccer skills outside of league activities	3.64	3.13
Opportunity to play age appropriate high-performance soccer	3.55	2.96
Financial support to participate in soccer	3.06	3.63

Additionally, player/parents and stakeholder respondents identified additional supports/programs they believe to be important. Additional descriptive detail of these supports/programs can be found in Appendix 8. Commonly identified areas of importance were good quality competition and support for recreational players.

Any other supports/programs not mentioned above that you believe are important for an effective soccer system in Saskatoon?					
Support/Program Theme	Players/ Parents	Stakeholders	Support/Program Theme	Players/ Parents	Stakeholders
Good Quality Competition	X	X	Consolidated Registration	X	
Support for Recreational Players	X	X	Information for new players and parents	X	
Scheduling	X		Appropriate facilities	X	
Flexibility in Boundaries	X		Reduced Zones	X	
Communication	X		Etiquette Program	X	
Collaboration	X		Encourage Participation	X	
Earlier competitive programming	X		Developmental Programs	X	
Location	X		Administrative Support		X
High Quality Equipment	X				

Focus group participants identified important support areas to be:

- Coaching development – to enhance the quality of coaching available in Saskatoon.
- Ability to play soccer in their community – games and practices hosted within the player’s community.
- Increased availability of indoor facilities – access to affordable, proper sized practice space.
- Fair evaluation process – free from the politics of soccer.
- Enhanced promotion of soccer – increase the participation of youth in soccer.

Additional descriptive detail of the focus group conversation can be found in Appendix 9.

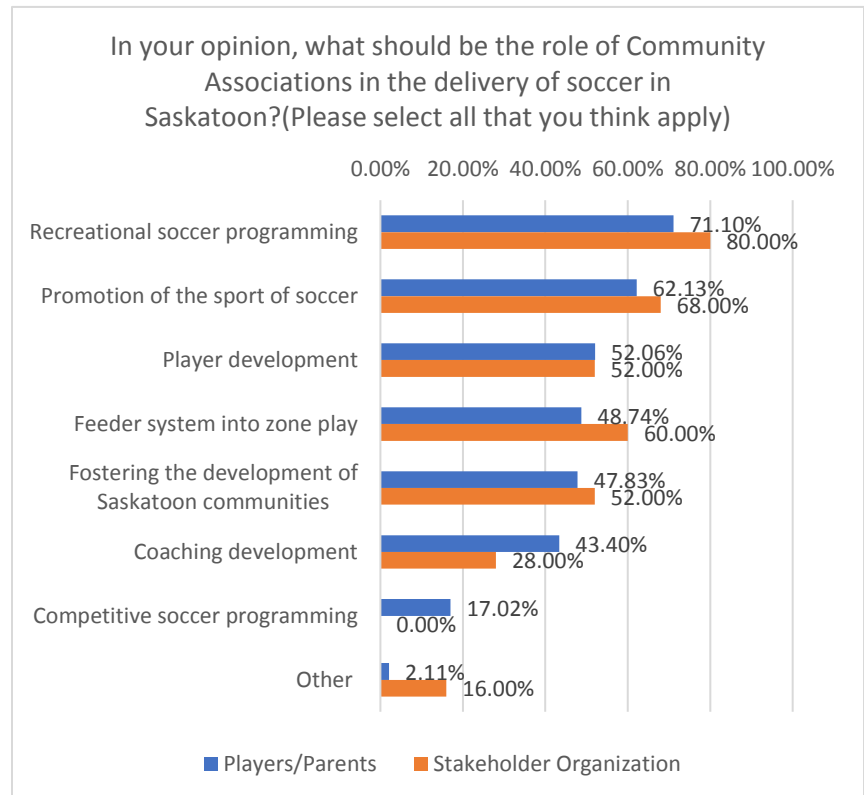
Consultant Insights

- As seen in the previous section, there is strong support for quality and appropriate competition.
- Stakeholder organizations identified the continued need for appropriate opportunity to play recreational soccer, as well as the availability for facilities (both indoor and outdoor) in players’ neighbourhoods.
- Focus group participants stress the importance of quality coaching as it sets the foundation for high quality competition, as well as to have increased access to proper facilities close to their home community.
- Mention was made by some focus group participants that the evaluation process is not always perceived to be fair, i.e., some players must attend the evaluations, while others do not. This is a potential reputational concern for SYSI.

Organizational Roles

Community Associations

Both player/parent and stakeholder organizations agreed that the primary role of Community Associations in the delivery of soccer in Saskatoon should include: Recreational soccer programming as well as the promotion of the sport of soccer. Additionally, both stakeholder groups identified Community Associations as organizations who should provide opportunities to play soccer at a reasonable cost. Some stakeholder organizations suggested Community Associations could manage recreational soccer for all age groupings.



In your opinion, what should be the role of Community Associations in the delivery of soccer in Saskatoon? (Check all that apply)

Category	Community Association	Zone Organization	Soccer Academy	Other
Recreational soccer programming	93.33%	60.00%	0.00%	75.00%
Promotion of the sport of soccer	73.33%	80.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Player development	46.67%	60.00%	0.00%	75.00%
Feeder system into zone play	46.67%	80.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Fostering the development of Saskatoon communities	73.33%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%
Coaching development	20.00%	40.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Competitive soccer programming	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other	13.33%	20.00%	100.00%	5.00%

When looking at the specific stakeholder responses, there is strong agreement throughout, that Community Associations should deliver recreational soccer programming and promotion of the sport of soccer.

Additionally, stakeholder organizations were asked which age groups Community Associations should serve in their soccer programming. Most stakeholder organizations (80.00%) believe that Community Associations should serve U5 & U7, there is slightly less support (60.00%) for U9. Other age levels suggested included Kinder Soccer and U11.

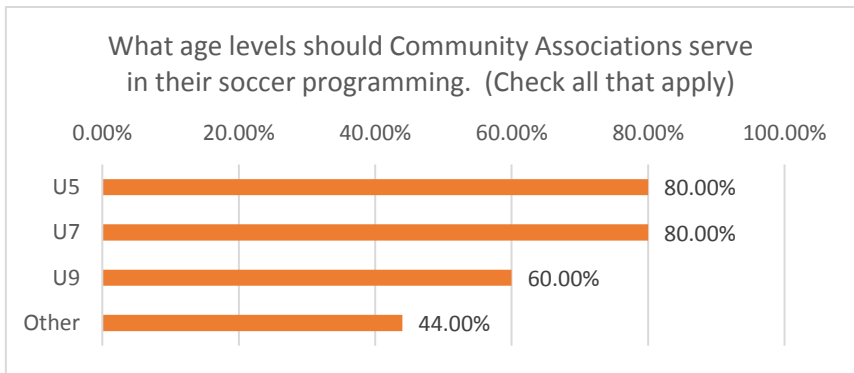
When breaking down the stakeholder responses by grouping we can see moderate Zone support for U5 and U7, but not for U9.

Zone Associations

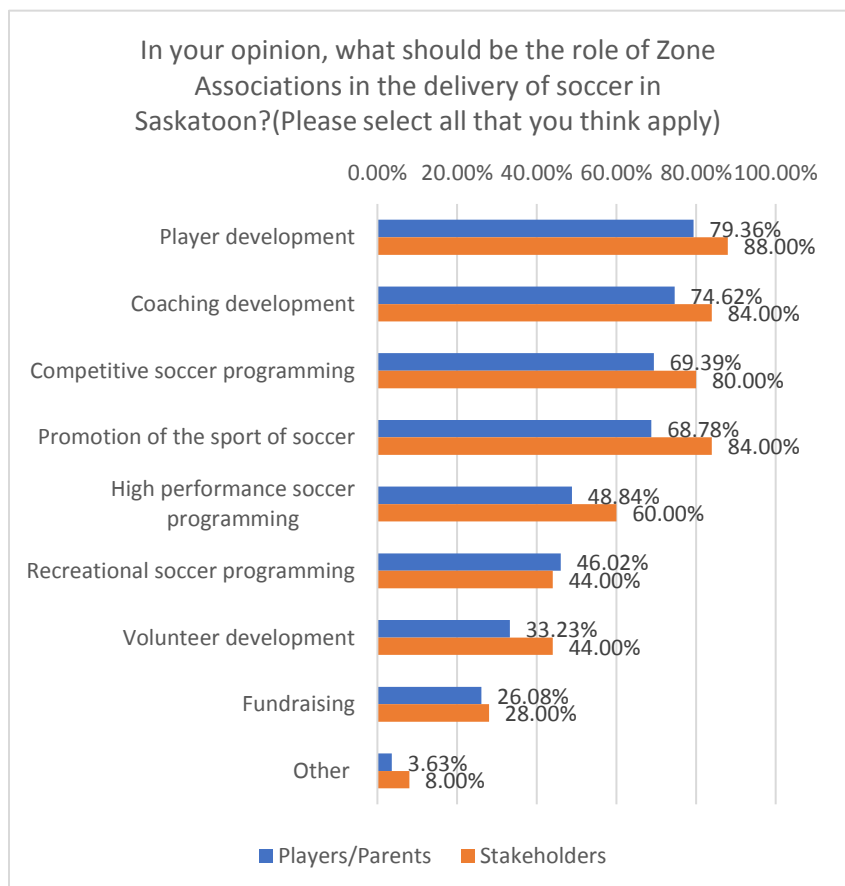
Again, both players/parents and stakeholder organizations were in alignment when asked what the role of Zone Associations should include. The aspects in which more than 50% of players/parents and stakeholders selected were:

- Player Development
- Coaching Development
- Competitive soccer programming
- Promotion of the sport of soccer

Notably, there were low degrees of support for zone associations to be responsible for recreational soccer programming and volunteer development. Another potential role for Zone Associations identified was providing expertise to Community Associations.



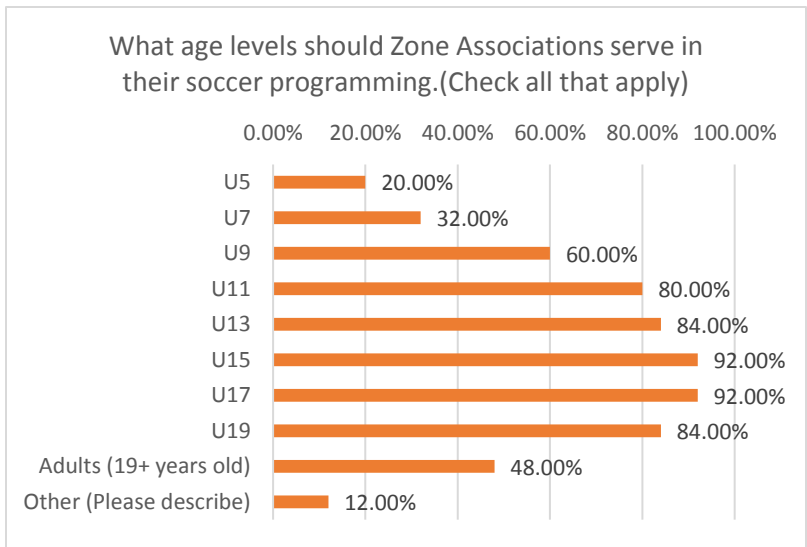
Category	Community Association	Zone Organization	Soccer Academy	Other
U5	86.67%	60.00%	0.00%	100.00%
U7	93.33%	60.00%	0.00%	75.00%
U9	86.67%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Other	46.67%	60.00%	100.00%	0.00%



In your opinion, what should be the role of Zone Organizations in the delivery of soccer in Saskatoon? (Check all that apply)				
Category	Community Association	Zone Organization	Soccer Academy	Other
Player development	80.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Coaching development	73.33%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Competitive soccer programming	80.00%	100.00%	100.00%	50.00%
Promotion of the sport of soccer	73.33%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
High performance soccer programming	73.33%	80.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Recreational soccer programming	13.33%	80.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Volunteer development	20.00%	80.00%	100.00%	75.00%
Fundraising	26.67%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other	13.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Breaking down the stakeholder responses by grouping show an across the board support for Zone Organizations to be responsible for player and coaching development as well as competitive soccer programming and the promotion of soccer. Most Community Associations and Zone Organizations believe Zones should be responsible for High performance soccer programming where Soccer Academies and Other organizations do not.

When asked which age groups Zone Associations should serve in their soccer programming, most stakeholder organizations (80.00%+) believe that Zone Associations should serve U11 – U19. There is slightly less support (60.00%) for U9.

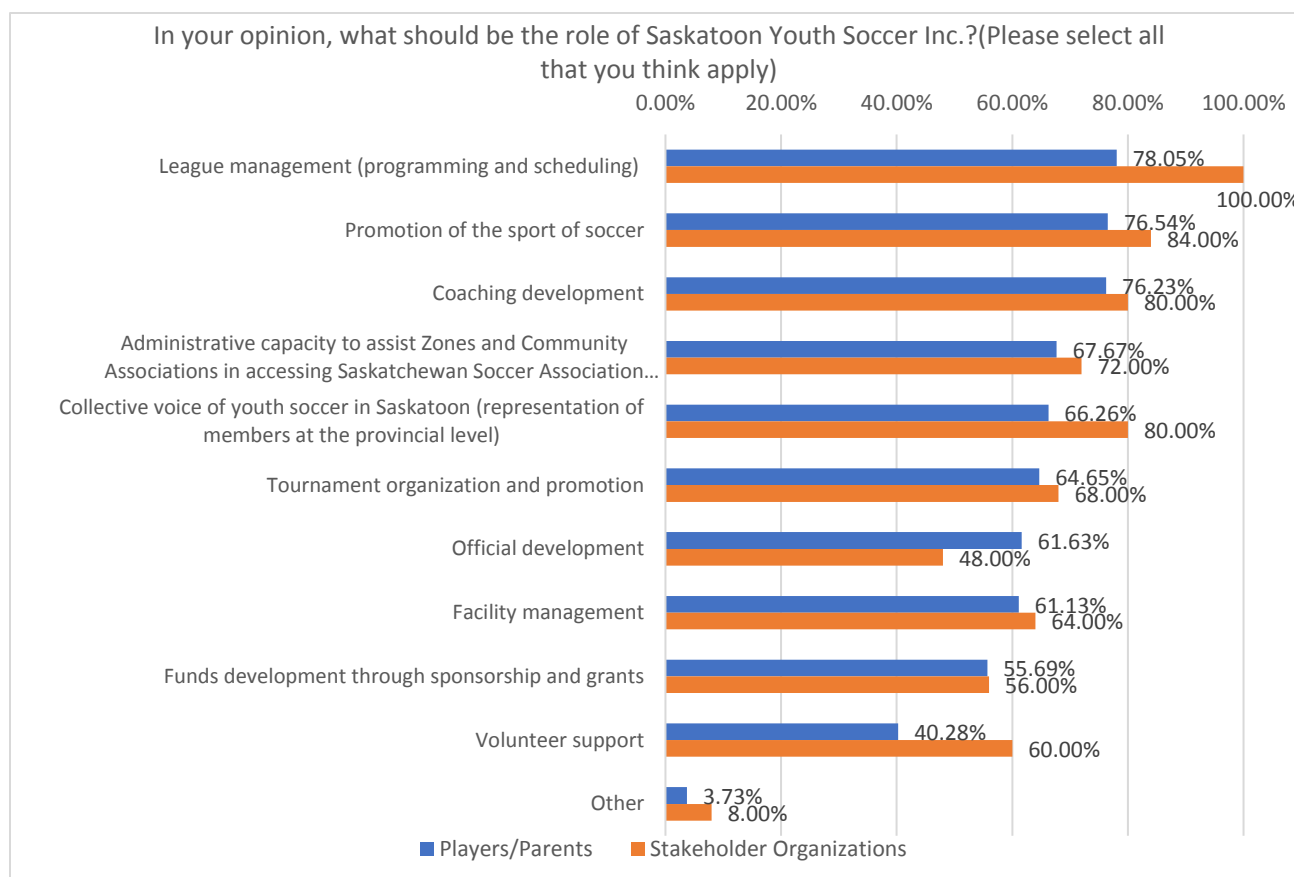


What age levels should Zone Associations serve in their soccer programming. (Check all that apply)				
Category	Community Association	Zone Organization	Soccer Academy	Other
U5	6.67%	40.00%	100.00%	25.00%
U7	6.67%	80.00%	100.00%	50.00%
U9	40.00%	100.00%	100.00%	75.00%
U11	80.00%	100.00%	100.00%	50.00%
U13	86.67%	80.00%	100.00%	75.00%
U15	93.33%	100.00%	100.00%	75.00%
U17	93.33%	100.00%	100.00%	75.00%
U19	86.67%	80.00%	100.00%	75.00%
Adults (19+ years old)	60.00%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other (Please describe)	13.33%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%

When looking at the breakdown of which age ranges Zone Organizations should serve, there is strong Community Association support for U9 and Older, strong Zone support for U7 and older. Soccer Academies believe Zones should support from U5-U19.

Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.

Again, both players/parents and stakeholder organizations were in alignment when asked what the role of Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. should include. The three most selected aspects by both players/parents and stakeholder organizations are league management, promotion of the sport of soccer and coaching development.



'Other' roles identified by players/parents and stakeholder organizations include:

Role/Description	Players/ Parents	Stakeholders
Financial aid options	X	
Working with all support soccer organization in planning and scheduling	X	X
I think SYSI needs to be the neutral governing body essential for accountability of community associations, zones and within zones as well.	X	X
Provide independent evaluations for zone player placement.	X	
Advocate for building physical literacy via soccer		X

When looking at the breakdown of stakeholder groupings. There is strong alignment between Community and Zones in most areas.

In your opinion, what should be the role of Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. in the delivery of soccer in Saskatoon? (Check all that apply)				
Category	Community Association	Zone Organization	Soccer Academy	Other
League management (programming and scheduling)	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Marketing and promotion of the sport of soccer	86.67%	80.00%	100.00%	75.00%
Coaching development	93.33%	60.00%	100.00%	50.00%
Administrative capacity to assist Zones and Community Associations in accessing Saskatchewan Soccer Association membership benefits.	73.33%	80.00%	0.00%	75.00%
Collective voice of youth soccer in Saskatoon (representation of members at the provincial level)	80.00%	60.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Tournament organization and promotion	86.67%	20.00%	100.00%	50.00%
Official development	60.00%	40.00%	0.00%	25.00%
Facility management	80.00%	60.00%	0.00%	25.00%
Funds development through sponsorship and grants	60.00%	80.00%	0.00%	25.00%
Volunteer support	66.67%	60.00%	100.00%	25.00%
Other	13.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Consultant Insights

- The player/parent and stakeholder organization respondents were closely aligned in what they see the primary roles for Community Associations, Zone Associations, and SYSI.
- The comparative chart below, which demonstrates the overlapping of Community Associations, Zone Associations and SYSI, indicates agreement that:
 - o The role of recreational soccer programming is that of Community Associations;
 - o The role of player development and competitive soccer programming is that of Zone associations; and,
 - o The role of volunteer development is that of SYSI.
- The comparative chart also depicts that the promotion of soccer and coaching development could potentially be a shared role between Zone Associations and SYSI
- The data collected from stakeholder organizations demonstrates the belief that Community Associations should program for U7 and younger and that Zone associations should program for U11 and older. Almost two thirds (62.50%) of stakeholder organizations believe that both Community and Zone associations should program for U9.
- Clear roles and responsibilities for associations should be established by SYSI to make communication of the structure as simple as possible.

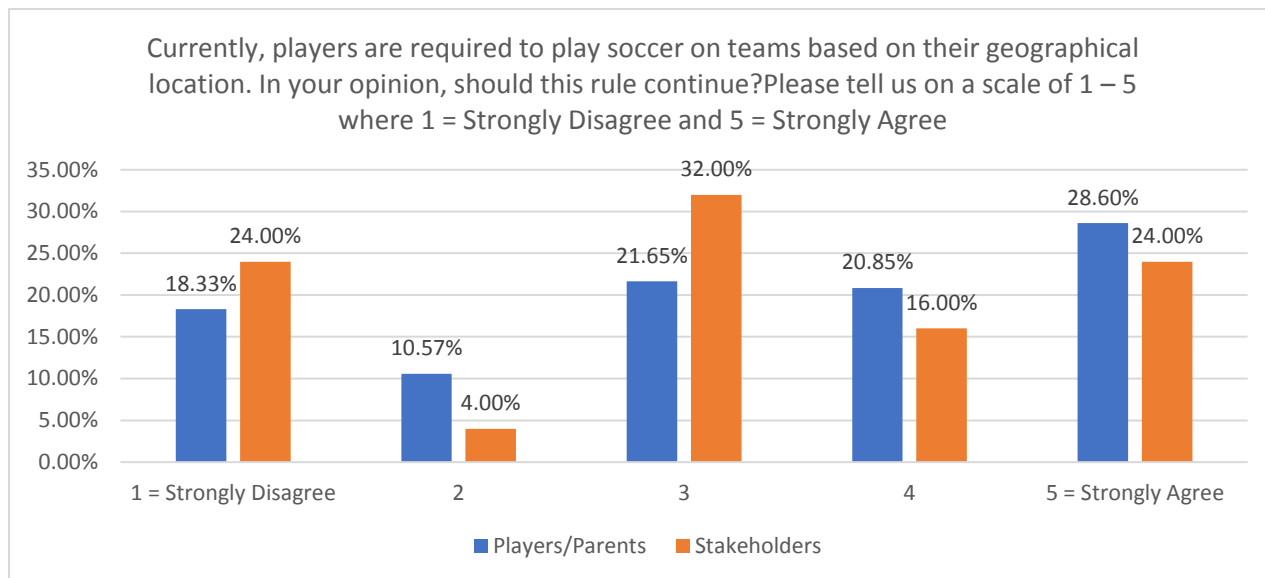
The table below is an aggregation of overlapping roles from this section. Percentages indicated in Blue indicate the percentages reported by parents/players. Orange percentages indicate percentages reported by stakeholder organizations. The green highlighted boxes indicate the highest percentage for the role for both player/parent and stakeholder organization respondents.

Role	% Agreement for Community Association		% Agreement for Zone Association		% Agreement for SYSI	
Promotion of the sport of soccer	62.13%	70.83%	68.78%	87.50%	76.54%	84.00%
Coaching development	43.40%	29.17%	74.62%	87.50%	76.23%	80.00%
Recreational soccer programming	71.10%	83.33%	46.02%	45.83%	N/A	N/A
Player development	52.06%	54.17%	79.36%	91.67%	N/A	N/A
Competitive soccer programming	17.02%	0.00%	69.39%	83.33%	N/A	N/A
Volunteer development	N/A	N/A	33.23%	45.83%	40.28%	60.00%

Zone Structure

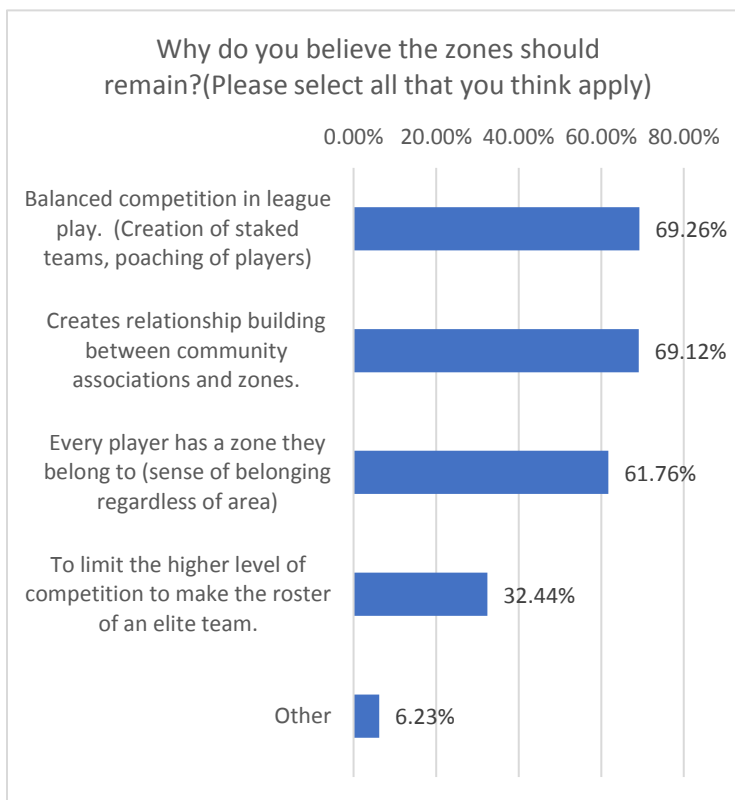
Players/parents and stakeholder organizations were both asked if they believe the requirement for players to play in their geographical location should continue. The average response of both groups were slightly above neutral towards agreement:

- Player/parent respondents (average response: 3.31/5)
- Stakeholder organizations (average response: 3.12)



The players/parents who responded positively to the zone rule continuing (between 3 and 5 inclusive), were asked why zones should exist. Three responses were selected by more than 50% of player/parent respondents. There were two key themes within the 'other' responses:

- Limit travel for practice and playing – increase accessibility to practices and games
- To help in building relationships and make friends in the community/neighbourhood.



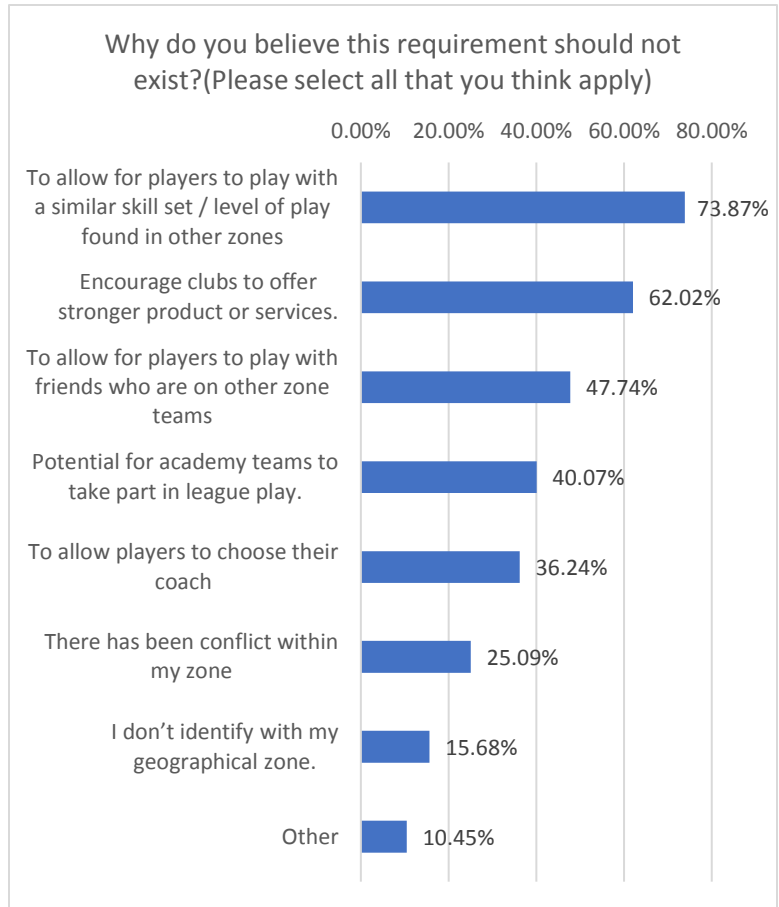
Similarly, the player/parent who responded negatively (1 and 2 inclusive), were asked why zones should not exist. The two reasons selected by more than 50% of the respondents were:

- To allow for players to play with a similar skill set found in other zones
- To encourage clubs to offer stronger products and services.

The key theme of the 'other' reasons was to even out player numbers.

When asked what the optimal number of geographical zones would be, almost half (45.10%) of players/parents suggested more, with 44.44% of stakeholder organizations suggested the same amount.

Some Key alternative structures identified were: a club model, distinct recreation and competitive streams, Hybrid zone and club model dependent on recreation/competitive streams and many others. Other suggested models can be found in Appendix 10.



If the membership structure were to continue with a geographical zone structure, what would be the optimal number of zones?			
Respondent Group	More Zones	The Same Number of Zones	Less Zones
Players/Parents	45.10%	25.77%	29.13%
Stakeholder Organizations	38.89%	44.44%	16.67%

Among the alternatives structures there were also principles for consideration identified. These included: equity and fairness, limiting travel time, encouraging play with friends, ability to play at a desired level (competitive vs. recreational), ability to play with quality coaches, select desired services.

Inter-jurisdictional and Inter-sport Structures

The information within this section is compilation of data collected during the interviews with the previously mentioned soccer and sport organizations.



Club Model
 Four levels of play from recreational to highly competitive (academy)
 Members are the players
 5 Board members
 Competency - based Board
 Policy Board



Flexible Zone Model
 Non-contact, tackle and academy leagues
 Members are the players
 8 Board members
 Balance of competency-based and parent involvement on the Board
 Policy Board



Hybrid Zone Model
 Six geographical zones
 Members are players and coaches
 14 Board Members
 Seven members elected at AGM and seven zone commissioners (elected by their zones)
 Policy Board



Zone Model
 Five geographical districts with three levels of play
 Members are district clubs and community centres
 10 Board members
 Volunteer Board, most have soccer interests (parents, past/present players, etc.)
 Policy Board



Club Model
 Twelve clubs in five geographical districts
 Four levels of play
 Members are players
 9 Board members
 Competency-based board
 Policy Board



Club Model
 33 clubs with no boundaries
 All competitive
 Members are the clubs
 11 Board members
 Competency- based Board
 Shifted from operational to policy recently

Recommendations

The sport of soccer in Saskatoon is facing many challenges. Participant numbers are declining while the number of programming options within and outside of the sport are increasing. On a provincial and national level, the sport is maturing administratively (e.g., club licensing) while resources for professional administration and volunteers are declining. Further, there is an ongoing desire to increase the development of players while many players are simply looking for recreational and/or lifelong participation. SYSI continues to be challenged to respond to these ongoing dynamics and to serve diverse communities of interest.

Enhance Management of Communication and Change

There is a clear need for system adaptation to better serve the soccer community in Saskatoon; however, consultations reveal a desire for incremental versus transformational change. Participants in the stakeholder forum expressed concern that extensive change may result in greater system disruption than is warranted. It is important to be mindful of this cautionary feedback; “tweaking” the system to test changes incrementally may result in greater adoption and longer term benefits.

It will be important to assess the impact of any proposed changes on each affected stakeholder group. Further, engaging impacted groups in implementation will go far to fine tuning the change in increasing acceptance.

Coupled with change management is effective communication. Throughout the consultations it was evident information was lacking or assumptions were being made. This is common in volunteer organizations due to volunteer turnover, time limitations and lack of day to day involvement.

SYSI will need to dedicate time and resources to over-communicating with its stakeholders. This involves defining key messages and communicating information repeatedly over multiple channels.

Open Zone Boundaries for Older Athletes

The zone structure was studied extensively through this project. Despite some concerns with the zone structure, the survey results indicated a relative balanced in opinion regarding satisfaction with existing system. The stakeholder forum strongly supported the current zone structure with a willingness to remove zone boundaries for older ages.

Zone boundary removal for older players may go far to retaining players by enabling them to select their preferred team based on peer and coach preferences and/or relationships. Depending upon the success of this model, consideration could be given to adding younger age groups on an incremental basis.

Stakeholders cautioned SYSI in ensuring that removal of boundaries does not result in the creation of “super team”. Further, if boundary removal is considered for younger players, consideration to barriers such as transportation must be taken into account.

Better Transition from Community Association Soccer to Zone Play

Consultations consistently spoke to concerns regarding drop-out as players transition from community association participation to zone play. This is a missed opportunity for soccer in Saskatoon; most sports do not enjoy such a robust feeder system and to not capitalize on this strength is a significant strategic loss.

Zones and SYSI would do well to develop mechanisms to integrally link programming between these two providers. Hosting annual forums whereby coaches and volunteers meet to seek mutually beneficial opportunities, e.g., coaches and officials training, participant development, special events, etc., would go far to increasing understanding and removing the intimidation that seems to prevail when moving to zone play. As volunteers turn-over frequently, it will be important to repeat programming on an annual basis.

Consultations did reveal some degree of competition between zones and community associations where each provider was offering programming within the same age groups. This must be openly addressed on a case by case basis. It is likely that programs are sufficiently dissimilar that competition is minimal and, in fact, programs may be complementary leading to a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, community associations may offer ongoing recreational programming for players not ready to enter the zone system resulting in them staying in soccer versus dropping out to join alternative sports.

Enhanced Recreational Programming

It was evident throughout the consultations that the development and or promotion of a recreational stream is necessary. While this may already exist, it is not widely understood and requires additional communication. There was significant emphasis placed on lifelong participation and the need for adult league play.

Targeted recreational program development is necessary to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of participants and that system stakeholders are aware of program offerings. A continuum from community association to adult soccer is needed in order to provide a clear line of sight for parents and participants. Promoting soccer as a life long sport is an important variable in a parents' decision to enrol their child in soccer.

Increased Promotion of Soccer in Saskatoon

There is a belief amongst some stakeholders that participation numbers are declining due to a lack of promotion of soccer in Saskatoon. It is unlikely that the cause is this simple or singular; however, it may be contributing factor.

The first step to addressing this issue is role clarity. It is unclear who is leading sport promotion – SYSI, the zones, the City or SSA. The reality is that all have a role to play. The SYSI could assume a facilitative leadership role to determine a promotion strategy. Once the roles are clear, a promotional strategy can be built

Appendix 1: Jurisdictional Interview Questionnaire

Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. Sports Organization Interview Guide

Background: Praxis Consulting has been engaged by Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. to conduct a review of its membership structure in order to best position itself for growth within Saskatoon. As part of this project, we are interviewing other sports organizations to learn of their organizational structures and any best practices they may have found.

Interview Questions

1. Describe the governance structure of your organization. Specifically, do you have a policy board or an operational board? What is the structure of the board – representative or skills based?
2. How is your membership currently structured? Clubs, zones, other
 - a. What works well about this structure. What doesn't work well?
3. What services do you deliver to your membership?
 - a. Does this differ between categories? Coaches, officials, player development, sport promotion, competition programming, facilities management, other
4. If you could restructure the way your organization works, what would change and why?

Appendix 2: Zone Session Agenda

**Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.
Zone Sessions
SaskTel Sports Centre Boardroom, Saskatoon**

Session Objectives:

- To identify trends in soccer participation;
- To determine the vision for soccer in Saskatoon;
- To define the current delivery model;
- To understand the issues; and,
- To determine if solutions exist.

Approach:

- Attendance requested: President, Vice President, Technical Director, and other board members as available.
- Conversation style: Large Group conversation facilitated by Praxis.

Estimated Time	Agenda Item and Facilitation Questions
5 Minutes	Welcome, Introductions, Project Background
20 Mins	<p>Trends in Soccer</p> <p>What do you regard to be the most important trends impacting participation in soccer? Consider both positive and negative trends.</p> <p>What are the implications of these trends?</p> <p>What can be done to take advantage of positive trends or reduce the impact of negative trends?</p> <p>Have you observed any innovative ideas from other organizations within soccer or within other sports that you think should be considered in Saskatoon?</p>
30 Mins	<p>Vision for Soccer in Saskatoon</p> <p>Imagine that Saskatoon is regarded as the most successful soccer city, what would this involve? Who is involved? What programs are offered? Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Player Attraction (U5 and up) - Player Development and Retention - Official Development - Volunteer Development - Governance

Estimated Time	Agenda Item and Facilitation Questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competitions <p>What must be in place in order to achieve this vision? What must be in place to enable the growth of soccer in Saskatoon?</p>
30 Mins	<p>Current State</p> <p>Describe the current delivery model in Saskatoon for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Player Attraction (U5 and up) - Player Development and Retention - Official Development - Volunteer Development - Governance - Competitions - Other? <p>Who is involved? What are the roles of each of the entities that are involved? What is working well about the delivery model in Saskatoon? What is not working well?</p>
10 mins	<p>Gap Areas</p> <p>Reflecting on what is currently available. What do you believe are the most significant gaps between the future you envision and the current delivery model?</p>
20 Mins	<p>Solutions</p> <p>What solutions do you recommend to address the identified gap areas? Who do you believe is best suited to provide the solution you suggest? What do you regard as the ideal structure of soccer delivery in Saskatoon for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Player Attraction (U5 and up) - Player Development and Retention - Official Development - Volunteer Development - Governance - Competitions - Other? <p>Based on your assessment of the system, what is your ideal role for SYSI? How can SYSI structure its membership to meet this need?</p>
5 Mins	<p>Adjourn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Next Steps

Appendix 3: City of Saskatoon Session Agenda

**Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.
City of Saskatoon Session
May 28th, 2018**

Session Objectives:

- To identify trends in soccer participation;
- To determine the vision for soccer in Saskatoon;
- To define the current delivery model;
- To understand the issues; and,
- To determine if solutions exist.

Estimated Time	Agenda Item and Facilitation Questions
5 Minutes	Welcome, Introductions, Project Background
5 Mins	City of Saskatoon's Role Describe how the City of Saskatoon is involved in the delivery of Soccer.
20 Mins	Vision for Soccer in Saskatoon Imagine that Saskatoon is regarded as the most successful soccer city, what would this involve? Who is involved? What programs are offered? Consider the roles of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Associations - Zones - Academies - The City of Saskatoon - Sask Soccer Association - SYSI What must be in place to enable the growth of soccer in Saskatoon?
15 Mins	Current State & Gap Assessment What is working well about the delivery model in Saskatoon? Reflecting on what is currently available. What do you believe are the most significant gaps between the future you envision and the current delivery model?
10 Mins	Solutions What solutions do you recommend to address the identified gap areas? Who do you believe is best suited to provide the solution you suggest? What do you regard as the ideal structure of soccer delivery in Saskatoon?
5 Mins	Adjourn

Appendix 4: Survey Questionnaires

Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. Stakeholder Organization Survey.

Introduction: Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. (SYSI) is undertaking a review of its membership structure. Praxis Consulting has been engaged to support this work.

To assist with the project, SYSI has contracted Praxis Consulting to collect feedback from SYSI's stakeholders through this online survey. The survey takes only a few minutes to complete. Your response is strictly confidential – it is combined and reported in an aggregate manner only. All survey information from this survey link will be held in confidence at Praxis and no names will be attached to the data or known to SYSI.

If you have any questions about the survey, please feel free to contact Garion Carlson at gcalrson@praxis-consulting.ca.

At this time, we would also please like you to hold **June 9th** in your calendar if possible as we will be bringing stakeholders together for a membership structure discussion forum. Invitations will be sent out to all stakeholders.

Thank you for taking time to share your opinions on this online survey.

Demographic

1. Which category best describes the organization you represent?
 - a. Community Association
 - b. Soccer Academy
 - c. Zone Organization
 - d. Other (Please Describe)

2. Which best describes your current role
 - a. Volunteer board or committee member
 - b. Coach
 - c. Community Soccer Coordinator
 - d. General volunteer
 - e. Paid staff
 - f. Other (Please Describe)

Survey Questions

1. What types of supports/programs do you believe are most important for an effective soccer system in Saskatoon? Please rate each aspect on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = Very Unimportant and 5 = Very Important
 - a. High quality referees

- b. High quality coaches
 - c. High quality facilities
 - d. Opportunity to play age appropriate high-performance soccer
 - e. Opportunity to play age appropriate competitive soccer
 - f. Opportunity to play age appropriate recreational soccer
 - a. Availability of indoor facilities in my neighbourhood (school gyms)
 - b. Availability of outdoor facilities in my neighbourhood (parks, greenspaces)
 - c. Opportunity to play soccer all year
 - d. Opportunity to develop soccer skills outside of league activities
 - e. Financial support to participate in soccer
 - f. Other (Please describe)
2. In your opinion, what should be the role of Community Associations in the delivery of soccer in Saskatoon? (check all that apply)
- a. Recreational soccer programming
 - b. Competitive soccer programming
 - c. Feeder system into zone play
 - d. Coaching development
 - e. Player development
 - f. Promotion of the sport of soccer
 - g. Fostering the development of Saskatoon communities
 - h. Other (Please describe)
3. What age levels should Community Associations serve in their soccer programming. Select the all that apply.
- a. U5
 - b. U7
 - c. U9
 - d. Other (Please describe)
4. In your opinion, what should be the role of Zone Associations in the delivery of soccer in Saskatoon? (check all that apply)
- a. Recreational soccer programming
 - b. Competitive soccer programming
 - c. High performance soccer programming
 - d. Coaching development
 - e. Player development
 - f. Volunteer development
 - g. Promotion of the sport of soccer
 - h. Fundraising

- i. Other (Please describe)
5. What age levels should Zone Associations serve in their soccer programming. Select all that apply.
- a. U5
 - b. U7
 - c. U9
 - d. U11
 - e. U13
 - f. U15
 - g. U17
 - h. U19
 - i. Adults (19+ years old)
 - j. Other (Please describe)
6. In your opinion, what should be the role of Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.
- a. League management (programming and scheduling)
 - b. Tournament organization and promotion
 - c. Facility management
 - d. Collective voice of youth soccer in Saskatoon (representation of members at the provincial level)
 - e. Volunteer support
 - f. Coaching development
 - g. Official development
 - h. Marketing and promotion of the sport of soccer
 - i. Funds development through sponsorship and grants
 - j. Administrative capacity to assist Zones and Community Associations in accessing Saskatchewan Soccer Association membership benefits.
 - k. Other (Please describe)
7. In your opinion, what is working well in the delivery of soccer programming in Saskatoon? Please list your top 3
8. In your opinion, what is not working well in the delivery of soccer programming in Saskatoon? Please list your top 3. For each item, please feel free to suggest your solution
9. Currently, players are required to compete in the zone where they reside. In your opinion, should this rule continue? (Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree)
10. If the membership structure were to continue with a geographical zone structure, what would be the optimal number of zones? (Drop down box for number of zones) Why? (Open Ended)

11. If the membership structure were to be changed from a geographical zone structure, what do you believe could be an appropriate alternative structure? (Open Ended)

12. SYSI is very interested in learning anything it can do to continue to enrich the experience it offers to soccer players in Saskatoon. Please provide any additional comments you would like to pass along to SYSI, or anything you think SYSI can do to improve soccer in Saskatoon? Thank you!

**Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.
Player and Parent Survey**

Introduction: Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. (SYSI) is undertaking a review of its membership structure. Praxis Consulting has been engaged to support this work.

To assist with the project, SYSI has contracted Praxis Consulting to collect feedback from SYSI's players and parents through this online survey. The survey takes only a few minutes to complete. Your response is strictly confidential – it is combined and reported in an aggregate manner only. All survey information from this survey link will be held in confidence at Praxis and no names will be attached to the data or known to SYSI. If your player is under the age of 16, would ask that you complete the survey on their behalf.

If you have any questions about the survey, please feel free to contact Garion Carlson at gcalrson@praxis-consulting.ca.

Thank you for taking time to share your opinions on this online survey.

Demographic

3. Which category best describes you?
 - a. Player
 - b. Parent/Guardian of a Player

4. <If selection of Player> Indicate your age category?
 - a. U5 – If selected, redirect to page requiring parent to fill out the survey.
 - b. U7– If selected, redirect to page requiring parent to fill out the survey.
 - c. U9 - If selected, redirect to page requiring parent to fill out the survey
 - d. U11 - If selected, redirect to page requiring parent to fill out the survey
 - e. U13 - If selected, redirect to page requiring parent to fill out the survey
 - f. U15 - If selected, redirect to page requiring parent to fill out the survey
 - g. U17
 - h. U19

5. <If selection of Parent> (If you are answering on behalf of a child, and there is more than one child in your household playing soccer, please select the child who has the next birthday and answer the survey on the basis of the experience of that person) In which age range do(es) your child(ren) fall into:
 - a. U5
 - b. U7
 - c. U9
 - d. U11

- e. U13
 - f. U15
 - g. U17
 - h. U19
6. Which seasons did you or your child(ren) play in the past year? (Select only one)
- a. Indoor
 - b. Outdoor
 - c. Both Indoor and outdoor
7. Select the community in which you reside. (Drop down box alphabetical for all Saskatoon neighbourhoods)
8. What is the age of the player for which you are responding? (Drop down box Options 3-19)

Survey Questions

13. Do you or your child play competitive sports other than soccer? (yes/No)
- a. If yes – Do you:
 - i. Play other sports during soccer season
 - ii. Play other sports outside of soccer season
14. Which best describes you or your child’s participation in soccer in Saskatoon? (Please select all that you think apply)
- a. Recreational
 - b. Competitive
 - c. High Performance
 - d. Other
15. What influences your or your child’s decision to continue playing? (Please select all that you think apply)
- a. Maintain fitness
 - b. Enjoyment of the sport of soccer
 - c. Wish to become a more competitive soccer player
 - d. Parental encouragement or pressure
 - e. Peer encouragement or pressure
 - f. Friends are playing soccer
 - g. Relationship with coach
 - h. Meet new people
 - i. For the competition and or challenge
 - j. Be part of a team
 - k. To win
 - l. Learn new skills

- m. Travel to tournaments
- n. Access to scholarships in post-secondary institutions
- o. Access to funding
- p. Other (Please describe)

16. What types of supports/programs do you believe are most important for an effective soccer system in Saskatoon? Please rate each aspect on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = Very Unimportant and 5 = Very Important

- a. High quality referees
- b. High quality coaches
- c. High quality facilities
- d. Opportunity to play age appropriate high-performance soccer
- e. Opportunity to play age appropriate competitive soccer
- f. Opportunity to play age appropriate recreational soccer
- g. Availability of indoor facilities in my neighbourhood (school gyms)
- h. Availability of outdoor facilities in my neighbourhood (parks, greenspaces)
- i. Opportunity to play soccer all year
- j. Opportunity to develop my soccer skills outside of league activities
- k. Financial support to participate in soccer
- l. Other (Please describe)

17. How likely are you to continue to play soccer in the next year? Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = Very Unlikely and 5 = Very Likely

18. What do you think might hold some people back from choosing to continuing to play soccer in the future? (Please select all that you think apply)

- a. Lack of opportunity to play with players of a similar skill set
- b. Lack of high quality referees
- c. Lack of high quality coaches
- d. Lack of high quality facilities
- e. Lack of opportunity to play age appropriate high-performance soccer
- f. Lack of opportunity to play age appropriate competitive soccer
- g. Lack of opportunity to play age appropriate recreational soccer
- h. Lack of availability of indoor facilities in my neighbourhood (school gyms)
- i. Lack of availability of outdoor facilities in my neighbourhood (parks, greenspaces)
- j. Lack of opportunity to develop my soccer skills outside of league activities
- k. Increasing fees to play soccer
- l. Other (Please describe)

19. In your opinion, what should be the role of Community Associations in the delivery of soccer in Saskatoon? (Please select all that you think apply)
- a. Recreational soccer programming
 - b. Competitive soccer programming
 - c. Feeder system into zone play
 - d. Coaching development
 - e. Player development
 - f. Promotion of the sport of soccer
 - g. Fostering the development of Saskatoon communities
 - h. Other (Please describe)
20. In your opinion, what should be the role of Zone Associations in the delivery of soccer in Saskatoon? (Please select all that you think apply)
- a. Recreational soccer programming
 - b. Competitive soccer programming
 - c. High performance soccer programming
 - d. Coaching development
 - e. Player development
 - f. Volunteer development
 - g. Promotion of the sport of soccer
 - h. Fundraising
 - i. Other (Please describe)
21. In your opinion, what should be the role of Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.? (Please select all that you think apply)
- a. League management (programming and scheduling)
 - b. Tournament organization and promotion
 - c. Facility management
 - d. Collective voice of youth soccer in Saskatoon (representation of members at the provincial level)
 - e. Volunteer support
 - f. Coaching development
 - g. Official development
 - h. Promotion of the sport of soccer
 - i. Funds development through sponsorship and grants
 - j. Administrative capacity to assist Zones and Community Associations in accessing Saskatchewan Soccer Association membership benefits.
 - k. Other (Please describe)

22. Currently, players are required to play soccer on teams based on their geographical location. In your opinion, should this rule continue? (Please tell us on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

a. <If selected 1 - 2> Why do you believe this requirement should not exist? (Please select all that you think apply)

- i. There has been conflict within my zone
- ii. To allow for players to play with friends who are on other zone teams
- iii. To allow for players to play with a similar skill set / level of play found in other zones
- iv. To allow players to choose their coach
- v. Encourage clubs to offer stronger product or services.
- vi. I don't identify with my geographical zone.
- vii. Potential for academy teams to take part in league play.
- viii. Other (Please describe)

b. <If selected 4 - 5> Why do you believe the zones should remain?

- i. Creates relationship building between community associations and zones.
- ii. Balanced competition in league play. (Creation of staked teams, poaching of players)
- iii. To limit the higher level of competition to make the roster of an elite team.
- iv. Every player has a zone they belong to (sense of belonging regardless of area)
- v. Other (Please describe)

23. If the membership structure were to continue with a geographical zone structure, what would be the optimal number of zones? (Drop down box for number of zones) Why? (Open Ended)

24. If the membership structure were to be changed from a geographical zone structure, what do you believe could be an appropriate alternative structure? (Open ended)

25. SYSI is very interested in learning anything it can do to continue to enrich the experience it offers to soccer players in Saskatoon. Please provide any additional comments you would like to pass along to SYSI, or anything you think SYSI can do to improve soccer in Saskatoon? Thank you! (Open ended)

Appendix 5: Focus Group Moderator Guide

Before we begin we'll also warm up participants somewhat by providing them with some context about why we're doing the focus group.

Background: Praxis Consulting has been engaged by Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. to conduct a review of its membership structure. As part of our project we are conducting a focus group of players aged 16+ to better understand your perspective regarding Soccer in Saskatoon.

Discussion Questions (Approximately 10 minutes per question)

1. Let's go around the table and start the discussion today by telling us why you play soccer?
2. Describe your level of participation in soccer in Saskatoon (recreational activity, high performance, etc.)
3. What influences your decision to continue playing soccer?
Probe: Why do you continue to play soccer?
4. What types of supports/programs do you require from the soccer system in Saskatoon?
 - a. Are these supports currently available to you as a player? Who are they offered by/who should offer them?
5. Reflecting on what is currently available...what do you believe are the most significant areas in which the player experience in Saskatoon can be enhanced?
6. We know not everyone will choose to play soccer, but like any sport organization, we want to know what we can do to get more people thinking about choosing soccer, or continuing to play soccer, for their recreation. What do you think might hold some people back from choosing to continuing to play soccer in the future? What are the things that discourage you from continuing to play soccer? Why do you think players stop playing soccer? Can anything be done to address this?
7. So, in closing, what could be done to encourage more people like yourself to participate, or continue to participate, in soccer in Saskatoon?

Appendix 6: Stakeholder Session Agenda

**Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.
Stakeholder Engagement Session
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
September 22, 2018**

Session Objectives:

- Overview of consultation findings – trends and issues
- Determine implications of status quo
- Establish perspective on a common vision for soccer in Saskatoon
- Determine critical success factors for effective soccer delivery in Saskatoon
- Evaluate delivery system options
- Determine roles of key delivery agents
- Discuss key issues
 - o Community association involvement in the soccer delivery continuum
 - o Academy involvement in the soccer delivery continuum
- Inform the governance of the SYSI

Agenda Item and Facilitation Questions	Facilitation Approach
Welcome & Introductions	Round Table
Session Overview	Presentation
What we Heard	Presentation
Implications of Status Quo - If we continue with the status quo, what can we expect?	Large Group Discussion
Vision for Soccer - What we heard - Critical success factors	Presentation
Delivery System Options - What are the benefits of each option? - What are the drawbacks? - Is there a modification that would improve this option? - Would you recommend this option? Why or why not?	Heterogeneous Group Discussion
Prioritizing Options - Which option do you believe is the best possible delivery system for soccer in Saskatoon? - Why is this option preferred?	Homogeneous Group Discussion

Determining Responsibilities - Which functions should be associated with each delivery agent?	Heterogeneous Group Discussion
Transition and Opportunities - What solutions should be considered to enhance programming at the community association level and to more effectively transition players from community to zone/club play? - How can academies be integrated into the overall sport development continuum in Saskatoon? - In keeping with the policy governance model, what recommendations do you have to ensure that SYSI is representing the interests of the soccer community as a whole?	Large Group Discussion
Barriers/Enablers to Change - What is going to move us toward better outcomes? - What is going to hinder positive change? What can we do about it?	Large Group Discussion
Next Steps - What can be done in the short term to take action of what we have discussed today? - What are some of the longer-term issues/actions that should be addressed?	Large Group Discussion
Adjourn	

Appendix 7: Other responses for 'What do you think might hold some people back from choosing to continue to play soccer in the future?'

- Bad experience
- Scheduling conflicts
- Lack of interest in soccer
- Pressure to start focusing on a single sport.
- Unfair placement on teams and inconsistent evaluation process
- Ability to get to games and practices across the city
- Lack of peers playing soccer
- Lack of prompt schedule
- Lack of communication between coaches, organization and fields
- Coaches that do not focus on creating a positive and fun environment that encourages players to play for life.
- "politics" within the clubs and between the clubs. "
- Not enough players on a team.
- Just not enjoying it / not having fun
- Other activities to try during the same season"
- Lack of appropriate field
- Not enough priority placed on high performance and developmental programming
- Too frequent practices and games for younger age categories
- Lack of Recreational stream
- Lack of ability to play with friends who live in different zones
- Lack of understanding how the system works
- Disparity among community association commitment to offering soccer programming
- Too many players on teams = too much time sitting
- Fees are too high

Appendix 8: Details for additional supports/programs important for an effective soccer system in Saskatoon –Surveys

Support/Program Theme	Additional Detail	Players/ Parents	Stakeholders
Good Quality Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Third party evaluations for try-outs - Ensure that similar caliber (and age) of players compete with each other to further growth of high performance players. 	X	X
Support for Recreational Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More open recreational programs and introduce sports programs and fun activities for kids. - Assist children who do not want to completely play become engaged in recreational play - For those not interested in being overly competitive or traveling but interested in developing a healthy and active lifestyle their children. 	X	X
Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A set schedule for practices each week. - Schedules are set further in advance. - Ability to sign up for specific days of week to play soccer. 	X	
Flexibility in Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability for players who want to play for other zones 	X	
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to find information on the website. - Effective communication about games, tournaments, field locations. - Better communication regarding fees. 	X	
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The ability for zones, academies and SYSI to work together. - SYSI and SSA must work together. 	X	
Consolidated Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One consolidated registration for the younger ages. - It is difficult to figure out where to register when a community doesn't have a team. 	X	
Appropriate facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practicing in small gyms is not beneficial to the players 	X	
Information for new players and parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the young players and new parents to learn rules. - To fully understand the different levels of soccer. - Explain the role of zones and SYSI 	X	
Reduced Zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the older age categories reduce the number of zones to keep players engaged and challenged instead of each zone competing for higher skilled players. 	X	
Etiquette Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For parents, players, coaches that outline standards of play and participation at each level. - Outline specific behaviours that assist in positive culture. 	X	

Support/Program Theme	Additional Detail	Players/ Parents	Stakeholders
Earlier competitive programming	- More competitive programming and tiering begin for kids at an earlier age	X	
Developmental Programs	- Conditioning and strength training - Programming in alignment with Coaching Canada principles	X	
Encourage Participation	- New Canadians - Indigenous participants - Girls	X	
Location	- Compete and play in the neighbourhood in which players live. It can be difficult for some to attend games outside of the neighbourhood	X	
High Quality Equipment	- High quality equipment for players to use.	X	
Administrative Support	- To assist community level volunteers and parents		X

Appendix 9: Details for important for an effective soccer system in Saskatoon – Focus Group

Below are the themes of Focus group conversations.

Coaching development

More camps that can develop coaches and coaching skills to transfer to developing players.

More awareness of coaching camps is also important- many people do not know when they are available /occur

Unskilled volunteer parents often have to coach. They do the best they can but need development that they can pass on to players to enhance enjoyment of the game. Young players are often developing bad habits at young ages from inexperienced coaches, which hurts their development throughout the remainder of their playing days.

Key age groups that would benefit from stronger coaching throughout the system include <12 and <14; players suggest that they get most of their skills, and confidence, at these ages

Opportunities for kids to coach kids, especially younger kids, is important

Youth can help volunteer parents coach – parent can be the ‘Coach’ with the , but youth can actually coach drills and skill development

Make it more worth it for volunteer coaches – recognize them for the incredible work and time they put into their teams, regardless of their skill level

Ability to play soccer in their community

Younger kids would rather play within their own community, not driving across the city to play in another zone

Zones are a good idea as youth age, but maybe not for younger players – keep them playing in their neighbourhoods.

Too many restrictions make it frustrating for players. Be flexible - Make it possible for kids to stay with their teams when their families move to a different home in a different zone – important to kids and should not matter so much

Increased availability of indoor facilities

Need to bring more facilities for practices online – difficult to get indoor time in high schools and elementary school gyms and civic centres are too small to have meaningful practice

Soccer Centre is nice, but availability is limited and expensive

Fair evaluation process

'Take the politics out of soccer.' Evaluations are seen by many players as pre-ordained regardless of whether you're in an elite tier (i.e. don't have to evaluate) or a lower tier trying to work your way up to a more skilled tier.

Coaches are selecting kids they want, not based on skill level.

Important for lesser skilled players to be able to play in higher skill levels to develop.

Once you evaluate to a specific division, it is difficult (many kids say impossible) to evaluate up or down as you age.

It is important to youth in U10 and U12, but where they evaluate becomes less important as youth age.

Enhanced promotion of soccer

Awareness of registration is too low. Emails go to parents, so players not always aware. Could text mobile phones with registration notice and information.

Promote awareness and reminders of registration on-site at Soccer Centre and in schools near where kids and players live.

Find ways to promote SYSI soccer to elementary and high school kids in their schools (high school teams have limited number of players).

Players think new citizens don't seem to be aware of soccer opportunities with SYSI – need to find ways to promote to new citizens.

Find ways to bring more kids into soccer – Players recognize that there are not enough teams now so kids in the older segments (e.g., after U14) are having to play up or down age divisions to get games, which is not fun for either team (i.e., not competitive – more fun to play in the adult league instead of <19 as it is competitive).

Appendix 10: Details for alternative structures

Support/Program Theme	Additional Detail	Players/ Parents	Stakeholders
Competitive Recreational Streams	Player and Parent Respondents identified the need to have a strictly recreational stream where the players can play a game once or twice a week regardless of their skill level. This is believed to complement the current model based on improvement and development. It is believed that this would give parents and players the opportunity to pick between a competitive or recreational stream.	X	
Club Model	The elimination of zones where clubs can recruit players city-wide. Each club would then provide the product, philosophies, resources to recruit participants to join that club. Each club would have strict requirements to operate a club (qualified coaches, specific types of programming, proper long-term development strategy which must align with CSA LTPD, an audited, effective board, etc.)	X	X
City Wide Structure	With an internal recreation league and a competitive program. The competitive players would try out and be drafted to teams with qualified coaches. Competitiveness could be tiered by age and skill level. Let the other kids join a club (zoned or otherwise) in their area for more recreational soccer. The try-outs would be facilitated by a 3 rd , objective party (SYSI) to ensure players are all evaluated on an equal basis.	X	
Academies in League Play	Allowance of academy teams to play at a proper competitive level.	X	
Hybrid Draft System	A draft system with ability to play with friends. This would allow with even division of players with sensitivity to placement with at least one friend.	X	X
Less Zones	Remain in the zone system but implement fewer zones. This would enhance the ability of the zones to create competitive league play in all age/skill levels.	X	
Freedom to move between zones	For those near the boarder of zones, it may be easier to access programs of a neighbouring zone than the zone in which the player resides.	X	
Hybrid Geographical Structure	Recreational play within zones. Competitive play with a club model.	X	