

Feedback from Association Questions submitted

“Why do it” related

Q: What specifically is the state trying to "fix" with the current system (i.e., PDL)? With those objectives in mind, what specific changes in the proposal are necessary to do so?

A: The primary “fix” is the integration of the PDL structure with the state structure to address the Premier/ Regional level of play. Along with that is the engagement of the organizations with the greatest investment in the development of the upper-tier players in the process of improving our developmental programs and practices. The primary changes needed are the creation of the Regional Club subcommittee, the dual affiliation/ charter, and the launch of the Regional Club league.

Structure related

Q: Does Washington Youth Soccer have maximum number of Regional Chartered Clubs in mind?

A: No. The focus is on player access, so we expect the addition of clubs for Association not easily served today (think geographic barriers), and the likely consolidation of clubs and/or their associations. It’s not a mandate of this proposal, but a larger player base attached to a Regional Club better serves the upper tier player. That’s the focus of this specific activity.

Q: Can there be multiple (more than one) Regional Clubs (not teams) per Association?

A: No, with the exception of grandfathered clubs in the PDL today (one instance). It doesn’t make good developmental sense to create fragmentation of the upper tier of the player base within an association. At that level, there is sufficient competition from neighboring clubs to ensure a commitment to good programs. Better to focus on good relationships between Select/ Developmental clubs/ programs and the Regional Club within the association.

Q: If the state dictates that only one Regional Club per association how does the state reconcile premier regional clubs that don't want to merge into one?

A: Mergers would be a result of voluntary association consolidations, and the premier/ regional clubs would be part of that process. It’s not something that can be decided by the state generically for all associations/ situations.

Q: Top performing Premier clubs based on competitive results (currently from the PDL) will gain a permanent voice in the Premier/Regional level of the Seamless Soccer Opportunity System through: "consistency of charter coming from Washington Youth Soccer ". What is this? Need further explanation permanent or not? How is consistency defined?

A: This is spelled out in the body of the proposal, and enabled by the dual affiliation or “charter”. Modifications to a Regional Club becomes a joint process between the local association and the Washington Youth Soccer. As a Regional Club, representation is gained as part of the extended Regional Club subcommittee.

Q: Page 7 minimum association player base of 4000 - is this realistic?

A: Not in all regions, so we have defined an approach to act on geographic exceptions. It is a reasonable goal to start with.

Q: How does the governing board adequately balance the smaller and larger clubs in managing these leagues? Is it the "Senate" model or "House of Representatives" or ?

A: All Regional Clubs participate in the extended subcommittee, and are part of the process to elect the representatives that sit directly on the Regional Club subcommittee. There is no weighted vote.

Q: How is the relationship between the Association and the Premier/Regional Club supposed to work? Specifically, who rules the roost in the Association? The implication from the draft document implies that the Association exercises little governance control over the Regional Club, but is expected to make whatever changes are needed to support the Regional Club.

A: This is spelled out in the proposal to some level of detail. The simple view is that the Regional Club charter will manage the minimum "scope" of the club with their associations, but the club is still accountable to the local association and part of their organization.

Q: If the Premier/Regional clubs pay more in registration, do they get the advantages of priority choice (training times, fields...) over the other two branches? Is this something the state wants each Association to figure out? Fields are usually owned by cities or schools. A limited number of clubs may have facilities. Rarely are the resources owned/controlled by Associations.

A: This is an association process.

Q: When game and training fields are owned by a club, does the state feel the dual charter allows them to schedule events there for state programs?

A: No. Dual affiliation is about establishing some base consistency of scope and programs, not about ownership or access to assets.

Q: There is an implication in this proposal that player movement may be restricted, at least at younger age groups, to ensure the player pool for Premier/Regional Clubs. Is this true? It has long been held that players have the right to go wherever they (or their parents) want to play.

A: There is nothing in the Regional Club proposal that implies a restriction on player movement.

Q: Dual affiliation for Premier/Regional Clubs is not well explained, but seems intent on removing these clubs from any real governance by the associations. This concept does not seem necessary to the running of state level leagues (segregated or integrated), nor to the definition and implementation of player development programs.

A: It is not the intent to remove Regional Clubs from governance by their associations. However, as programs are defined to improve development, the dual affiliation allows for the consistent modification of charters to enable rollout. This is not a state level league proposal, but a proposed approach to how we provide development to the upper-tier player.

Q: The definition of 'ethics' should be common across the state organization, and for all levels of play. How is this Regional Club subcommittee qualified to define, impose and monitor compliance to unique

'ethics' requirements? The existing PDL governance structure has done a poor job of establishing compliance to requirements they defined for themselves (e.g. abuse of player pass rules).

A: The Regional Club subcommittee activities related to ethics will be specific to the challenges faced by clubs at this level. Organization ethics are still the responsibility of Washington Youth Soccer and their organizational entities (i.e., associations) to enforce.

Q: The table regarding the number of teams per age group (for U14 and below) has minimum and maximums that are the same. The subsequent paragraphs provide every indication that there is no intended maximum per age group for a variety of reasons from association size to just a simple club request for more teams in the Regional Club league. Please provide an explanation of what is really being proposed to focus the Regional Clubs to develop the 'top 5%' of the players in the state and not just fill numbers.

A: The minimum is the number of teams a Regional Club is allowed to form by charter. The maximum is the number of teams they are allowed to place in the Regional Club league. This allows the association to determine if they wish to expand the charter of the Regional Club to address a larger population of players, or if they will support the basic charter only. Some associations support their Premier/ Regional club forming as many teams as the player/ parent base supports. Those additional teams will play in the appropriate league (i.e., Open or District level).

Q: Must Regional Clubs submit their development programs to the Regional subcommittee for approval? Is association approval required first? Are clubs realistically being denied the ability to define and control their programs?

A: Yes, actually having a development plan will be a requirement. It's actually a requirement today in the PDL, but one that isn't measured. Clubs will still control their programs – this is about raising the bar.

Q: Is Washington Youth Soccer a 501c3 Non Profit organization or is the state going to a "For Profit Organization"?

A: Washington Youth Soccer and its member organization are, and will continue to be non-profit organizations.

Q: How would the development of the players be addressed? Details are needed regarding this facet of the proposal.

A: The Washington Youth Soccer Technical Director will work with the three subcommittees and the Oversight Committee to design and implement development programs.

League related

Q: How do you reconcile a CAP system for interleague when the teams never play each other. We assume the state will allow the non Regional Club teams to actually earn there way into the top league if the CAP system justifies it?

A: CAP alignment can be accomplished through state cup play, and if needed some organized inter-league play. Yes, this proposal specifies that at U15 and above, qualifying teams can move from Open league to RCL. It also will move teams from RCL to Open league at that point.

Q: Current PDL systems allows for some interpretation of the CAP system for grouping like clubs (for example, a team lost/acquired significant talent. How would the state accomplish the same?

A: For now, very similar processes.

Q: Disciplinary issues should be consistent across all levels of play. Why should the top level have a special group?

A: Disciplinary has always been attached to the specific league or event.

Q: What is plan "B" if the Washington Youth Soccer misses it's Fall 2010 deadline? Status Quo?

A: Taking this as a league-related question – while it is unlikely that the league changes couldn't be implemented, Washington Youth Soccer will not take actions that will disrupt the ability of players to compete.

Q: For U15 and above, given the diminishing numbers of players in these age groups, why not just have fully integrated leagues based on the CAP system? Why maintain segregated leagues, and then incorporate 'crossover' play? If teams are qualified for 'crossover', they should be in the league. Also, 'crossover' play will lead to other complications (e.g., inability to reschedule late season games based on unknown opponents, standings based on CAP vs. W-L-T, etc.).

A: Fair point, and something that could change over time as we mature the operation. At U15 and above, the movement of teams between the two leagues will eliminate the value of crossover play.

Q: Team play up is only addressed at U10/U11 in discussion of academies. What will be the policy at other ages? Will 'approval' be needed from the Regional Club subcommittee? Association endorsed?

A: Associations can choose to extend the role of the Regional Club to enhance training and development at younger levels, as long as it doesn't violate any USSF/USYSA/Washington Youth Soccer rules.

Q: As implemented, the player pass use has nothing to do with player development and everything to do with protecting team W-L standings, and also results in reduced playing time for rostered players. What will be done for the current seasonal year to correct this? How will clubs/coaches be monitored to ensure compliance with a defined policy?

A: Any changes in this area would be targeted for Fall 2010 when the new structure rolls out. There is agreement that the current approach does not provide enough structure to avoid abuse.

Q: For PDL Clubs, the Directors of Coaching provide input and assistance with scheduling, promotion/relegation, etc. Currently there is no avenue for Director's of Coaching to be involved in assisting teams with the organizations facets of soccer.

A: Regional Club DOCS and administrators will continue to be involved as part of the subcommittee, as they are today with the PDL.

Implementation related

Q: Does our advanced competition club/ program qualify?

A: All current PDL clubs/ programs qualify. In addition, associations that meet the size or geographic criteria will have the ability to pursue establishing a Regional Club, if they are willing to meet the

standards. This ensures a path to access for PLAYERS, which is the focus of this approach. We are using the term “club”, but some associations use a program structure and would still qualify.

Q: Page 7 states a 3 year grace period for association / club mergers. What if clubs find such mergers untenable due to fundamental differences in their culture/approach?

A: Three years should provide a long enough runway for groups to find common ground. It’s almost impossible to predict how many will be successful and how many will struggle. If there is broad progress, then the remaining organizations will push forward. If this part of the strategic plan struggle or is modified, then this limitation will be adjusted.

Q: The current proposal does not address the mechanics of how changes would be implemented.

A: This is partially intentional. The key step in implementation is the launch of the Regional Club subcommittee. Many of the specific actions require involvement from the stakeholders in order to ensure the best path to implementation and acceptance. If there are specific areas that are of concern, please share those.

Q: Are any changes going to be adopted, or accepted before the 16th?

A: No. This has been a nearly six month process to get to this point, including multiple feedback sessions. As soon as we feel this proposal is understood and implementable, we will move forward.

Q: If the recent performance is any indication of the state to organize and schedule such things as the state cup, the league schedule and notifying its membership in a timely manner on changes... it does not leave us with much confidence in this proposal being well thought out or to be effectively executed. How can the state convince its membership it can perform these proposed changes?

A: The changes required to implement the Regional Club proposal are relatively contained, and the timeline for rollout of the RCL reasonable. Ultimately, the only proof of the ability to execute is execution. You can’t stop attempting changes because of the challenges faced in previous activities. In this situation, months of effort have gone into aligning the various constituents and preparing the approach to launching the subcommittee.

Q: After the meeting on the 12th, will this proposal and changes be presented to the Oversight Committee for approval? If so and this committee declines it, is this proposal dead? In short, can the Oversight Committee deny this proposal? What about PDL Club acceptance/approval – do the PDL Clubs have any say regarding this implementation?

A: This proposal is aligned to the state strategic plan. With enough alignment from the Oversight Committee, the associations that have provided feedback and continue to do so, and the input/ acceptance of the PDL clubs, we will move forward. It does not go forward or get stopped based on a simple vote by any party, other than the Governance Board.

Q: Item 1 under the Regional Club chartering indicates new clubs will be added for associations that are not currently represented in PDL. If clubs in these areas met the PDL criteria, they would already be included. Does this mean that clubs will be added regardless of any criteria?

A: No. Clubs still need to meet the charter criteria. The primary differences are one per association, and no artificial limit of “top 20” on a competitive scale.

Q: It would appear that in order to have strong proposal regarding the structure of state soccer many opportunities would be provided for input. A variety of avenues and a variety of audiences would provide the best opportunities for diverse input. At this point the only input is being provided by Association Presidents.

A: Months of effort and many hours have gone into this proposal. This change is specifically focused on the Regional Clubs, not all other levels.

Financial related

Q: The current proposal does not address costs. At least for Girls HS division, we state fees per game played (now only 9 games from 14 games not so long ago) are higher than PDL. What efficiencies are will occur to remain pull out cost and become competitive?

A: The initial approach for the Regional Club league is to migrate the current PDL activities with a target of cost neutral in year one. The cost of programs at all levels has been under review, with an objective of ensuring that each service being provided is aligned to the true costs of delivery.

Q: Does the state also plan to hike the registration fees for the Recreation teams like they intend for the Premier teams? Is the state aware a sharp spike may turn players away and thus impact each new association attempt at getting a minimum of 4,000 registered players? What are the targeted rate hikes to look like?

A: There are no targeted rate hikes in this proposal. In addition, the budgeted player registration fee put forward for next year is flat.

Q: A strong structural proposal for an organization should have finances outlined. A budget with estimated league and committee costs should be provided. Where is the financial material that supports this proposal?

A: The Regional Club league will be self-funded (as it is today).

Q: More information is needed regarding the direction of Seamless Soccer and how it will work with independent contractors. Assistance will need to be provided in writing contracts so all IRS rules will be followed.

A: As any policies/ changes are made regarding contractors, employees, etc., they will be shared. This proposal does not change the current situation.

Q: Are finances driving this proposal? Is it written with the hope of bringing back PDL teams league fees into the state organization?

A: No.

Q: In order for the proposal to be transparent, financial data is necessary. A professional proposal would include financials including but not limited to player participation fees and individual team costs.

A: Team costs are not in scope, but belong to the clubs/ associations. Player registration fees have already been proposed for next year, and are flat.

Select/ Developmental related

Q: Page 10: Washington Youth Soccer statewide league: is this for select level? Are we now requiring Select teams to travel through-out the state? Is this what we want? How will this look? Does the local adv comp leagues go away in favor of the Washington Youth Soccer Open league?

A: Today, the Washington Youth Soccer state league is populated primarily by teams that would be classified as Select/Developmental teams (from U13 to U16), due to the impact of the PDL. This proposal does not specify elimination of association or district based leagues. It does mention that if districts go away and associations consolidate, that the impact of those changes on league offerings needs to be planned/ managed. However, if Washington Youth Soccer leagues were expanded to address other areas (like current District leagues), they would have to be structured to serve the target audience – so no, it would not drive increased travel for select/ developmental teams. This is NOT in scope for this proposal.

Washington Youth Soccer Plan related

Q: What data suggests this is the optimum association minimum size, especially with the elimination of District level? With the advent of better software, does a minimum size really improve efficiency? It certainly makes the managing board overly challenging. By the state's own data, the median size is closer to 2000. This is a dramatic change.

A: Association size is about being large enough to service local league needs, leverage operations across a meaningful player base, and provide a large enough base to offer quality programs to higher level players, and older players.

Q: Does it really make sense to (1) eliminate districts, (2) push for club consolidation and (3) push for association mergers to 4,000 all at the same time?

A: In the strategic plan, this is a voluntary process and expected to take multiple years. It will not be something that happens all at once.

Q: Organizationally, there is a concern that too much power is vested in the various committees and not enough at the association/club level. While I realize this meeting is to take these workings public, I am not sure the document as written gives enough power to the association.

A: The associations are part of the chartering process with their Regional Club. The new state structure does not use a formal association voting process to implement things like league or rule changes. This was part of the change voted on last year to allow for the development of a more agile, responsive organization. It is important for association leaders to stay informed, participate in the various forums, and engage with the subcommittees and their initiatives as they roll out.

Q: What benchmarking has been done nationally to suggest such an overall approach (league structure, management, association size, etc) is the best known practice? Does Region IV encourage WSYS's approach?

A: The overall Washington Youth Soccer plan and structure was developed with significant external benchmarks, with non-profits and soccer organizations.

Q: What is the function or role of an Association? What impact will an association have in the decision making process of guiding any one of the three branches of play (Premier/Regional, Select/Developmental, Region/Local)? Without seeing the Select and Local level of play definitions, the implication is that Association aren't likely to have the autonomy to run programs as their member clubs want.

A: This level of play is for a small portion of the population, and requires a state-wide approach to league management. Select/Developmental and Rec/Local will have separate subcommittees and reflect the needs of those levels. Recommendations from those groups will also have to go through an extensive process for development, rollout, and adoption.

Q: The Oversight Committee includes Governance Board members, District Commissioners and selected others. How are these 'other' members selected and what constituency are they accountable to? Are there to be any soccer people or is it only to be staffed by volunteer administrators?

A: Ultimately, the Governance Board is responsible for the selection of committee members. The initial body is primarily comprised of District Commissioners, so is admittedly heavy on administrative background. All of the organizational entities (Governance Board, Oversight Committee, and subcommittees) will evolve over time, and the subcommittees require the greatest engagement from experts in the game.

Q: The state seems determined to significantly reduce the number of associations, and eliminate districts. How does the state plan to oversee 30+ associations, when we currently have 7 districts?

A: That is a learning process, and the reason that the initial pilots are taking place.

Q: How are the associations to communicate with each other without the current district meeting format? Is it to be through the sub-committees? How do non PDL or small clubs get their voice heard?

A: Districts continue to meet since they currently exist. The only way Districts are eliminated is if a consolidation process is successful. Once that occurs, your new association community is similar to your current district community.

Q: What is the criteria or process for someone to get on the respective sub-committees? If members are just selected by someone at the state level, what is their accountability to the overall membership? Perhaps they should be subject to election by the Council at the AGM.

A: In the case of the Regional Club subcommittee, they will be elected by the Regional Clubs. This is possible because there is a defined population. The challenge is the ability to secure committed, qualified volunteers to help drive similar activities aimed at Mod/Rec and Select/Developmental.

Q: What is so wrong with the current system? If we are to make changes, why can't they be done incrementally?

A: We are making them incrementally. If you look at what is actually being implemented – it's to populate a Regional Club subcommittee, bring the PDL in as the foundation for the Regional Club league,

and improve the consistency of the development activities for that level of play across associations and clubs. The changes in the Strategic Plan will take place over multiple years.

Q: The current state By-Laws still includes the seven Districts. This proposal makes no reference to districts. If they are eliminated, how is this to be done? Will By-Law changes be proposed/implemented for the coming AGM? Will the Governance Board implement changes without Association (e.g., Council) approval? What mechanism replaces it?

A: This proposal does not address modifications to Districts.

Q: The current proposal focuses on the top players who would be playing in the Regional Club League. It creates a structure for a larger player pool due to larger Associations. Is this the best format for the mid-level and lower level players?

A: It does support the formation of Select/ Developmental players more effectively (better populations at older ages). It also still provides the flexibility for the association to organize their local leagues to suit their geography.

Q: The current proposal does not address playing opportunities for U6 – U10 players.

A: They are not in scope for this initial proposal.

Q: The Oversight Committee has all the decision making power regarding this document. Where do Associations have a vote or part in the decisions? Where is the representation in the current structure?

A: Implementation of change requires involvement, support, and understanding of the involved parties. That's why this forum exists today. Prior to this, representatives from Districts, Associations, and clubs were also collaborated with to develop and test the approach.

Q: How does this plan benefit the "recreational" player and the "mod" soccer players? How will their soccer skills improve?

A: The focus of this proposal is on the Regional Club. It is not designed to address all levels of play. However, it will enable better engagement (in some associations) between the Regional Club and the other parts of the association.

Q: It is well known that there is a pyramid effect in youth soccer. The largest numbers of players occur in the younger age brackets and as the players get older, there are fewer players involved in teams. Where is the data that ensures that this structure won't speed up this process?

A: This structure does not depart from the current model sufficiently to "speed up" player runoff. If anything, improvements in consistency and quality of experiences should increase the number of players that develop a passion for the game.

Page 5 - Dual affiliation...

Q: To whom will the policies & standards, ethics, etc be directed? With the desire for seamless soccer, will these standards refer to all clubs & teams or just RCs?

A: The initial focus is the Regional Clubs. However, there will be some expectations that will be applied to all clubs eventually, and others that will remain specific to the type of club or program (Regional,

Select/Developmental, or Rec/Local). These will be represented in a charter document, the first of which will be for the Regional Clubs.

Page 7 - Regional Club chartering ...

Q: When will the review of Association coverage take place and who will conduct said review?

A: Within the first three months of launch. It will be the Regional Club committee, supported by the Washington Youth Soccer office.

(4) d - are the governance standards not already in place for the current structure? what do/will they cover? Repeat seamless soccer question.

A: Focusing on organizational governance, they will include some fundamentals regarding legal agreements, financial management, etc. Most of the established clubs have these in place - the emphasis will be on ensuring consistent practices. Similar efforts are needed to ensure a baseline set of financial and organizational practices for all levels of clubs/ programs.

General question

Q: Once we have had one year of the new system, what is the general consensus regarding 'grandfathered' teams which do not meet the desired standard of play, and has any thought been given to allow currently non-PDL teams participate at this level if their CAP scores reflect an ability to compete? Or is it that for the first three years there will be no changes to the brackets while the additional two elements are being implemented?

A: the grandfathering is for existing PDL clubs. All clubs will be reviewed annually, but the focus will be on how to improve performance under the charter, not their removal. In terms of teams - at U15 and above, the plan is to move teams to the appropriate level of competition (between the RCL and Open league). Assuming the league changes do go forward in Fall 2010, that would be the logical time to take those steps, most likely leveraging a combination of league and cup results. Planning those changes and how to implement them will be a task for the Regional Club subcommittee and the Washington Youth Soccer staff.