



Introduction

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC), is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational organization which builds the foundations of teamwork and sportsmanship through riding, mounted sports, care of horses and ponies, while developing and enhancing leadership, confidence, responsibility, and a sense of community in its youth and adult members.

When USPC was founded in 1954, it was as an educational organization with the goal of teaching young boys and girls the basics of horsemanship, riding, safety, teamwork, and leadership through working with horses and other children interested in similar activities. The goal was to develop and encourage a “happy child on a happy horse,” with the emphasis being on common sense, safety, and competency.

Over the next decades, the organization grew both in numbers and in its geography, with clubs reaching from coast-to-coast. Clubs even emerged in Hawaii, Alaska, and the Virgin Islands. USPC continued to strengthen and expand programming to meet the needs of equestrian enthusiasts of all ages. This included providing the Pony Club program through established riding centers and expanding the scope of certifications to include the disciplines of Dressage, Show Jumping, Eventing, and Horse Management.

With increases in many activities and programs, the complexity of the organization also increased, as did silos, processes, rules, volunteer and member needs, and challenges with dissemination of information to clubs, centers, members, families, and volunteers.

In 2019, a study was conducted on the USPC to identify and better understand issues and trends within the organization. Working groups were then appointed and requested to closely examine the key issues identified in the study and to provide the Board of Governors with specific recommendations to address those issues. Approving the recommendations of the working groups, the Board sent them forward to the Strategic Planning Committee for inclusion in the new 2022-2030 Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee has identified five strategic areas that reflect the approved recommendations, are essential to mission support, and key to the future state of USPC:

- People
- Education
- Innovation and Brand Development
- Organizational Model
- Sustainability

The goals for each of these five areas include current areas of organizational strength, areas requiring additional development, and areas of opportunities for USPC.

2022 USPC Strategic Plan

Our Mission: *The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. is an educational organization which builds the foundations of teamwork and sportsmanship through riding, mounted sports, care of horses and ponies, while developing and enhancing leadership, confidence, responsibility, and a sense of community in its youth and adult members.*

People: USPC's future, like its history, will build on the quality of the experience for its members and volunteers. The Board of Governors and staff will create consistency in its programs including, but not limited to, instruction, testing, horse management and competition. By simplifying requirements, USPC volunteers will have achievable, clear expectations, and receive strong support and training. The Board of Governors and staff will take into consideration the experience of the member and volunteer when creating and implementing processes around the Pony Club program.

Short-Term Goals:

- Expand USPC's volunteer base by creating a positive leadership environment among national, regional, and local levels using a variety of communication strategies
- Improve the onboarding process for new volunteer leaders by identifying best practices tailored to meet the unique needs at the local, regional and national level

Long-Term Goals:

- Close the opportunity gap by improving access, especially to underrepresented populations
- Increase retention/longevity of member and volunteer involvement
- Lengthen the average retention of regional and local officers to at least three consecutive years

Education: The foundation of USPC is education. USPC will improve its ability to consistently deliver excellence in education, programs and instruction, that align with the Standards of Proficiency and its mission. USPC will provide support and opportunities for all volunteers and staff to deliver a consistent, practical approach to the Pony Club program – focusing on excellence, not perfection, and prioritizing member experiences above all else. Its member-focused approach will improve learning outcomes at the local, regional, and national levels of USPC.

Short-Term Goals:

- Develop or establish USPC's role as a leader among equestrian organizations by providing educational resources regarding safe and proper horse and rider equipment fit and use
- Evaluate USPC's educational materials and expectations to ensure they are relevant and reflective of today's equestrian world
- USPC educational programming and expectations must remain as consistent as practicable throughout the full continuum of the membership
- Provide consistent training opportunities for instructors and officials that align with USPC Mission and Core Values

- Recruit and retain qualified alumni, volunteers, and others into instructor roles (NE and CHMJ, RICs, and club instructors) to foster consistent application of the Standards of Proficiency
- Horse Management Judge training shall emphasize flexibility (things are done differently in different parts of the country). Training and education will emphasize positive communication

Long-Term Goals:

- Meet the educational needs of agriculture, equine, and equestrian business

Innovation and Brand Development: USPC will plan for future needs of members and volunteers by building on existing strengths and services and being flexible as an organization. The Board of Governors and staff shall ensure that innovative developments align with USPC's brand identity and organizational values to create a publicly known face of USPC that celebrates its unique identity in the equine industry.

Short-Term Goals:

- Increase availability, awareness and utilization of online resources to convey uniform messaging regarding the Standards of Proficiency and expectations for USPC activities to members and the general equestrian population
- Create and maintain an engaging, mobile optimized website
- Develop hybrid models utilizing virtual opportunities to engage more members and volunteer leaders when and where possible
- Improve branding and marketing strategies to prioritize membership growth, retention, and public awareness
- Improve communications with our stakeholders, internally and externally, in order to recruit and retain instructors, volunteers and members

Long-Term Goals:

- Explore innovative ways to differentiate USPC from similar organizations and stimulate brand loyalty

Organizational Model: The needs and expectations of its members and volunteers has changed significantly in the last two decades. The Board of Governors and USPC staff will streamline operations in order to eliminate complexities that create little or no current value to USPC and its members and/or volunteers. Accountabilities and processes throughout the organization will be clarified to ensure the organization is staff driven, member centered, and volunteer supported.

Short-Term Goals:

- Optimize current processes and procedures to increase efficiencies throughout USPC
- Develop consistent application of the Pony Club program at sponsored activities (e.g., rallies, certifications, mounted and unmounted meetings, camps, clinics, etc.)
- The organization of Championships/Festival will be a National Office staff responsibility with the assistance of identified volunteer leaders
- Horse Management Judging administration at Championship competitions (assignments, judge review, scheduling, training, etc.) will be coordinated by the National Office

- National Testing administration (scheduling, examiner selection, examiner training, examiner review, testing sites, etc.) will be coordinated by the National Office
- The USPC Horse Management Committee in conjunction with the National Office, will develop simplified Horse Management requirements that emphasize safety, competency, practical application, and fun

Long-Term Goals:

- Create paid USPC staff positions (reporting to the National Office) within “Regions” or “Regional Zones” to carry out member services, program coordination, conflict resolution and other necessary administrative tasks
- Move to a system of Regional/National Testing Centers where candidates will only bring tack and clothing

Sustainability: USPC will strengthen its ability to fulfill and effectively deliver its mission now, and in the future. The Board of Governors and staff will explore ways to rebalance its funding model by reducing the percentage of its budget generated by membership revenue. In order to achieve this, USPC will develop other sources of revenue.

Short-Term Goals:

- Expand the USPC funding base to support anticipated growth in its programs and services
- Assess and develop new membership models and methods of packaging USPC curriculum (“product”) for use outside of traditional clubs/centers
- Continue to develop and implement strategies to incorporate financial planning into USPC’s leadership culture at the national, regional, and local levels and enhance fiscal accountability and budgeting for all programs and activities

Long-Term Goals:

- Develop diverse revenue streams that are consistent with its mission, vision and values