



Winnetka Hockey Club Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Mission: The Winnetka Hockey Club develops outstanding young people and players tied to their community through hockey.

Vision: By providing exceptional membership value, WHC is the club of choice for families from the local community, where players come to learn life and hockey skills, and build lasting friendships through involvement in the sport.

Values: Community, Family, Fun, Competitiveness and Sportsmanship

I. SUSTAINABILITY: WHC works to ensure a bright future for the Club and its members

Over the course of 2020-2021, WHC will commit to restructuring the organization and modernizing its approach to governance. The transition to a policy/skills-based board and an empowered staff structure, led by an Executive Director, would allow individuals to bring their strengths to helping move the club forward as a leading member of the broader hockey community in Illinois.

- A. A **policy board** sets strategy, manages organizational risk and oversees/approves the club's financials. A policy board structure generally works best with nine to 12 members who are part of the group based on skillsets. Usually candidates have backgrounds in finance, HR, marketing, and law, but this is by no means an exhaustive set of qualifications. A background in hockey, and even a relationship to someone in the Club, is not required, and in fact, it is a good idea to include individuals with no perceived conflicts within the organization.

Policy boards generally have **three standing committees**:

- a. *Finance and Audit* – Drafts and reviews financial policies and procedures (for board approval), reviews monthly/quarterly financial statements, annual budgets and helps to oversee the audit process/selection of auditors. Identifies and helps to manage financial risk.
- b. *HRM* – Drafts and reviews HR policies and procedures (for board approval), supports the Executive Director in creating/implementing an employee assessment process, leads the performance review of the Executive Director, reviews compensation and benefits to help ensure alignment with best practices.
- c. *Governance* – Drafts and reviews WHC policies and procedures (for board approval), including updates to the bylaws. Leads the planning and coordination of the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Other **ad hoc committees** can be struck by the Board or Staff to assist with projects/events. Some of these committees may be required to comply with governing body requirements. It is suggested that the Board have a **Nominations Committee** struck leading into the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to help recruit candidates as part of succession planning. Putting forth succession planning for volunteers and casting a wide net (including outside the club) to engage volunteers will reduce the over-reliance on a small pool of people. A **Sponsorship and Fundraising Committee** should also be considered to help with diversifying revenues.

SEE APPENDIX A

- B. The complementary **staff structure** would have an **Executive Director** heading up WHC's operations. This person would oversee all staff, including on-ice staff through the Hockey Director, and would be accountable to the Board of Directors. The timeframe to transition the governance and staffing model would be 2020-2021.

The **Hockey Director** in this structure would oversee all of the coaches and create, roll out and implement the player development and coach development curricula and plans. This leadership role would mean that their primary areas of focus are on coach development and overall club development.

Reporting to the Hockey Director would be a **Player Development Manager** who would be charged with player identification as well as supporting coaches on ice in delivery of the player development curriculum. This leadership role would focus on program coordination and coaching support.

This emphasis on coach development to enable better player development is key, and can include both external and internal assistance and education. From overall feedback, coaches across the club, while enjoying their experience, are not feeling supported. In addition, parents are not communicated with on how their children should be developing. Ensuring coach support and setting up systems for regular coach and player evaluations will help the Club improve overall.

From internal and external feedback, the skillset within the WHC player pool has eroded and players are not demonstrating age/stage appropriate skills consistently. A “back to basics” focus to ensure that the player base within the club is proficient in the bedrocks of hockey skills is critical. This includes a focus on House League coaches, and providing greater information and supports for them.

Structuring a staff position (**Operations Coordinator**) to oversee the House League and provide customer service and support for parents and parent-coaches should show myriad benefits. The Operations Coordinator would be in charge of the administrative aspects of registration, rostering, uniform ordering, recruiting volunteer coaches and preparation for the launch of the season as well as in-season support for parents and coaches. Depending on how the Executive Director would like to structure this role, it could begin as part-time/seasonal, working in the lead up to and during the season. Having the Player Development Manager also support the volunteer parent coaches should help to improve the experience for coaches and players overall.

- C. **Communication** will need to be a key focus at all levels of the club in delivering on the strategic plan. This communication will need to be two-ways: from WHC board and staff to its members and from the members back to WHC. Communication needs to be built into the culture of the club through a **Marketing/Communications Coordinator**. This person would manage electronic media, expanded social media presence, coordinate regular introduction/orientation and education sessions. They would be tasked with issuing consistent surveys and doing comparison of data year-over-year which would be built into the club’s KPI’s and shared with the membership. This role would also assist the Executive Director in pursuing and maintaining sponsors (see D). Like the Operations Coordinator role, this could be structured as part-time to begin, and then grow.
- D. Operationally, WHC can commit to **diversifying its revenue streams** and building its brand in the local community to help guard against organizational risk. Having a Marketing/Communications Coordinator on staff can help in both areas. Actively pursuing sponsorship can help insulate WHC against a drop in membership while promoting the club.

SEE APPENDIX B

II. PARTNERSHIPS: WHC will partner with like-minded organizations to better deliver value to its members.

With staffing support in the form of an Executive Director and a Marketing/Communications Coordinator, WHC will increase its communication and community outreach. Parent and member education sessions should launch in 2020-2021 and should become part of an annual club calendar, along with regular member surveys.

- A. **Promoting the benefits** of WHC's current relationships is critical to advance the club's transparency with its members. North Shore Ice Arena updates should be included in communications plans, as well as continuing work with the Winnetka Park District on future opportunities for program and facility development/redevelopment.
- B. WHC places a priority on teams playing at the appropriate competitive level. **Central States** is by far the most resource-intensive program the Club runs, and it affects the fewest number of players. It has detracted from a focus on overall skill development within the Club and support for programs like House League. WHC will determine how to best approach Central States, as well as overall travel team program structure and team placement, in a manner that properly serves the aims of the club and its members as a whole. Going forward, the WHC may want to explore strategic **partnerships**, such as the other three community clubs that feed the local high schools, to help deliver Central States. Additionally, priority should be given to working with other sport groups in Winnetka to cross-promote WHC and support best practices and resource sharing among the youth sport community.
- C. **Sponsorship** in general is an untapped revenue source. Through the staff and a Sponsorship Committee, engagement should be increased with current sponsors/providers. Additionally, aggressive reach out to the business community in Winnetka can add to the sponsorship prospects for the Club. SEE APPENDIX C

III. COACHES: Coaches are supported to make the player experience the best it can be at every level within WHC.

*With the Hockey Director role redirected to focus on coach development, WHC should launch a **Coach Development Plan** that works in tandem with the **Player Development Plan** to advance the quality of coaches the club requires to improve. This plan should include investments in coach education inside and outside the club with formal and informal learning opportunities built into the calendar. It is also critical to establish targets for coach certification. Regular coach assessments and evaluations should also be scheduled at least annually, more frequently for higher level coaches. All staff (paid) coaches should have personalized development plans created (with their input) and review them annually.*

- A. By better defining roles and accountabilities within the coaching staff/leadership group, and directing support from the Player Development Manager and the Operations Coordinator to help House League coaches and less-experienced coaches, this will lead to improvements in program delivery and help ensure a more consistent player experience.
- B. Three initiatives to launch for all coaches across WHC are
 - a. an annual coach induction program
 - b. a coach mentorship program
 - c. regular (at least annual) surveys for coaches about the support they receive from WHC and their development needs.
 - i. Coach satisfaction and development metrics should be built into the overall KPI dashboard.

IV. PLAYERS: WHC players are developed to be their best, as players and people, in the pursuit of a high school hockey career.

The prior three strategic pillars focus on core strategies needed to provide consistent delivery of hockey development programs, guided by the overall goal of giving players the best opportunity possible to participate in high school hockey, if they so choose.

- A. The creation and communication of a robust **Player Development Curriculum** by the Hockey Director will ensure the quality of WHC programs. The standards for player proficiency need to be understood by all coaches, including and especially House league, with knowledge of how to teach for the desired learning outcomes. The roll out and adoption of the program should be included in the KPI dashboards.
- B. **Player/Parent Education** is needed to properly inform them on what the curriculum is and what it means for participation in each program. This way, they are partners in development, and also have expectations laid out for them. All players need to be assessed by coaches at least annually through a uniform process that is overseen by the Player Development Manager.
- C. With the launch of the Player Development Curriculum, the **Player Development Pathway** should be clearly defined and a reassessment of the club's programs should be undertaken, particularly with an eye to WHC's travel program. The introduction or incorporation of goalie training, supplemental skills programs and camps also should be assessed. Player/parent surveys should be issued annually and compared year-over-year. Key satisfaction metrics should be included as part of the overall club KPI dashboard and should be reported to membership annually.
- D. Offering a consistent player experience at all levels of the club that values fun and development will lay the groundwork for improved **Player Retention**. Actively engaging with teenage players through a youth council will help. Getting their perspective on what they would like to see incorporated into their programs gives them a sense of ownership and helps build their leadership skills. Presenting teenagers, WHC's "next generation" of leaders, opportunities to stay involved in the club through coaching strengthens their ties and supports the club's mission. Examining extending House League beyond Bantam can also help keep ties to the WHC. Lastly, establishing and tracking alumni through a database and inviting them to return as guest coaches and mentors (beyond hockey) completes the circle of lifelong involvement with WHC.

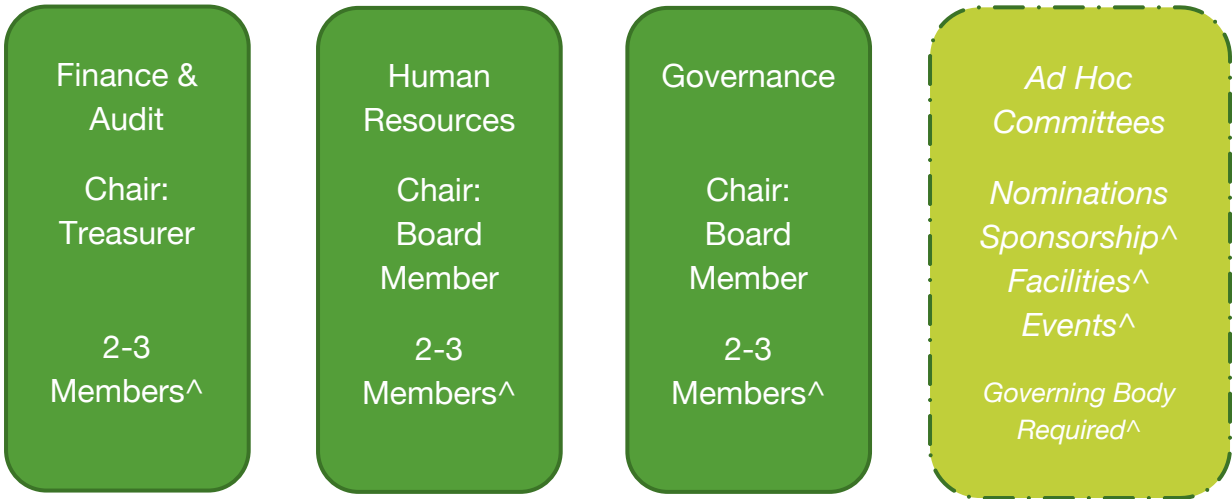
APPENDIX A

BOARD STRUCTURE

9 – 12 Members

Officers: President, Secretary, Treasurer (Finance Chair)

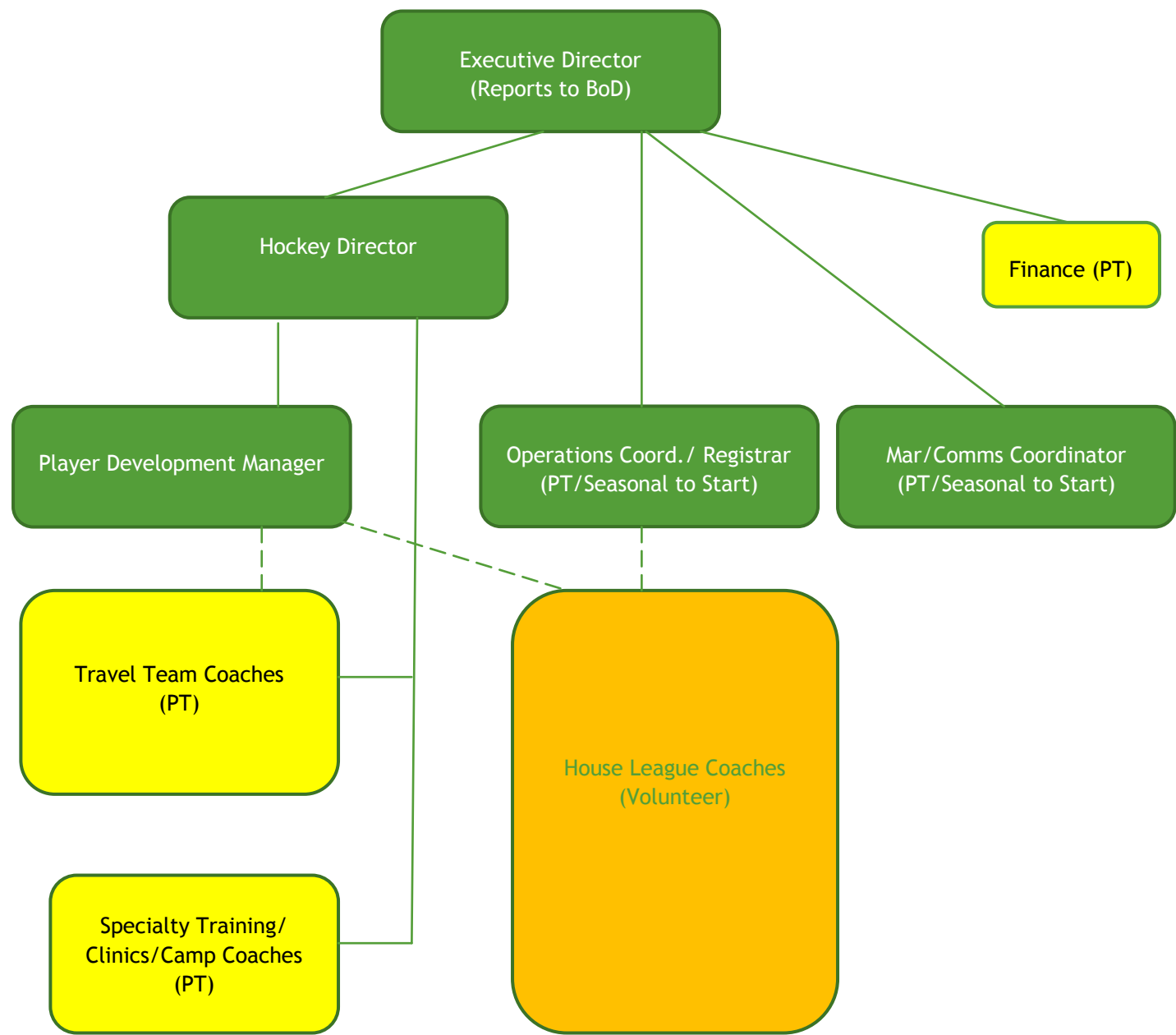
Committees: Finance & Audit, Human Resources, Governance



^Can include non-Board members

APPENDIX B

STAFF STRUCTURE



APPENDIX C

SPONSORSHIP PRIMER

In order to actively engage sponsors in support of WHC, the club will need to develop the following:

Sponsorship Policy – Outlining which types of organizations WHC will/will not partner with particular attention to political groups, religious groups, alcohol and tobacco companies as well as gaming.

Asset Inventory – A comprehensive list of everything related to WHC that can be sold or branded as part of a sponsorship package.

Asset Valuation – The dollar value associated with the items on the asset inventory.

Prospects – A list and assessment of potential WHC sponsors.

Proposals- Collateral such as pitch decks and letters used to solicit sponsors. These should contain key demographic data about the composition of WHC members.

Agreements – Templated letters/contracts for WHC partners.

Servicing Plans – Determining who and when sponsors will be serviced, including a year-end report.

Renewal Plans – Determining who and when current sponsors are approached to renew and hopefully expand their support of WHC.