

## **2025-2027 Rockland United Soccer Club Strategic Plan**

### **Introduction**

As the Rockland United Soccer Club (RUSC) enters its 30<sup>th</sup> year of operation, the RUSC Board has developed this Strategic Plan to help RUSC envision its key objectives and serve as a guide to RUSC achieving its goals over the next 3 calendar years. In order to operate, RUSC relies heavily on dedicated staff and volunteers who dedicate their time and resources to the organization. This commitment will be critical for RUSC to maintain its current and future operations and expand to be more responsive to the needs of our community.

### **Where We've Been**

Over the course of its history, the number of RUSC players, coaches, board members and volunteers has varied widely, depending upon factors within our control (recruitment, promotion of our product) and others outside of our control (the Covid-19 pandemic, interest in other sports, population growth in the area). As with many amateur sports organizations across Canada, the pandemic contributed heavily in a loss of players, coaches, board members and volunteers which our club has yet to fully recover from. Despite this, RUSC has still been able to deliver a quality product to its members and is focused on maintaining and growing that over the coming years.

### **Our Mission**

RUSC's Mission Statement is "Building a Better Clarence-Rockland, One Person at a time". RUSC aims to achieve this mission by pursuing the following goals through its programming:

- Build young people's self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth;
- Develop teamwork and leadership skills;
- Help young people discover purpose and develop vision;
- Encourage respect for others. Include young people of all abilities;
- Develop a sense of fair play.

RUSC uses soccer as a tool to enable these goals. We firmly believe that by pursuing these goals, we play an integral part in supporting young people in becoming well-balanced and resilient citizens who will contribute to their local community and its well-being. We believe in the power of soccer as a tool for community building and enabling young people to achieve the goals above.

## Our Strategic Objectives

Over the next 3 years, RUSC is focused on the following Strategic Objectives:



A short description of each of these 6 objectives is outlined:

### 1. Enhancing Player Development

RUSC has always been committed to player development, and in order to continue delivering the programming desired by community members, RUSC needs to dedicate sufficient resources to ongoing player development, including hiring a part-time Technical Director and running development programming for all streams of our programming, but especially focused on participants who wish to play at a competitive level, be it in Rockland or elsewhere if the competitive programming they're looking to participate in doesn't exist here. Gradually building up this programming over the next 3 years in a sustainable manner maximizes opportunities for the long-term growth of the competitive stream of the Club.

## **2. Enhancing Coach Development**

Eastern Ontario Soccer, Ontario Soccer and Canada Soccer continue to increase the technical qualifications needed by coaches at all levels parallel with the increased focus on player development from the local to national level. Although some of this increase is challenging for a small club such as RUSC, developing technical skills among our coaches is directly linked with Enhancing Player Development, and building a roster of competent coaches at various stages of their development over the coming three years is necessary to achieve growth of our Club at the recreational and competitive levels.

## **3. Maintaining and Bolstering our Volunteer base**

RUSC would be nothing without its volunteers; be it coaches, Board members, or the many volunteers we rely on for activities such as Soccerfest. Lack of volunteers remains a critical issue facing the Club and significant effort needs to be put into maintaining and growing our volunteer base. As with any volunteer role retention of volunteers over the long term is maximized by the following:

- Volunteers see the impact of their support and find it rewarding;
- They are treated with respect and fully supported by the organization;
- They have an avenue to address concerns with regards to operations;
- There are opportunities for growth and skill development;
- Their contributions, time and efforts are recognized.

Key to maintaining our base is understanding why people volunteer;

- Are they doing it simply so their child has a coach?
- Are they interested in contributing in some way to their community?
- Are they looking to develop skills?

All of these are equally valid reasons for volunteering, and understanding these reasons will be key to ensuring we have sufficient volunteers into the future and make the most of these resources.

## **4. Developing the next generation of referees**

Referees are important to the growth of our organization and of the sport, and dedicating adequate resources to their development is important for RUSC continuing to function.

Developing youth soccer referees is essential not only for the sustainability of a club like RUSC but also for fostering a strong soccer community. Youth referees bring energy, enthusiasm, and a fresh perspective to the game. By investing in their growth, the club maintains a group of skilled officials who understand the rules, uphold fair play, and contribute to the overall quality of matches. A well-trained referee not only ensures smoother matches but also contributes to creating a positive and enjoyable soccer experience.

Additionally, developing referees helps cultivate leadership skills and a sense of responsibility among participants. Many of these referees are players themselves, and stepping into this role deepens their understanding of the game, enhancing their ability to anticipate plays and make quick decisions. These experiences are invaluable, not only for their refereeing careers but also for their personal development, as they build confidence, communication skills, and the ability to manage conflict effectively.

For RUSC, prioritizing referee development strengthens its long-term foundation. It reflects positively on the organization, showing a commitment to developing all aspects of the sport—not just the players. By supporting youth referees with mentorship, resources, and opportunities for growth, RUSC can help create a supportive environment where both the game and the people involved can flourish.

## **5. Developing Facilities**

This falls into two major categories for RUSC

### Administrative Facilities

RUSC currently has the benefit of an office and storage that are provided at a fairly reasonable cost. We expect the picture in this regard to change greatly in the next 3 years; and we will likely not have an affordable office with storage available to us. Resolving this in a way that has a minimal impact on our operations will be key to the success of our Club, and will be achieved by re-thinking our needs in 2025 and beyond;

- Do we need a permanent office or just an occasional place to meet?
- What are opportunities for affordable equipment storage that meet our unique needs?
- How can we partner with other community organizations that have similar goals and requirements for facilities?

### Playing Facilities

RUSC currently uses a number of fields across Clarence-Rockland to deliver its programming; and it expects to lose some of these fields to incoming developments. In order to demonstrate to the City our need for good quality fields we'll need to continue to advocate for our sport-specific needs, show how we maximize use of existing facilities and demonstrate how the Club is growing. We have a strong historical relationship with the City and it is beneficial to both the Club and the City to maintain and build on this relationship. When we look to the future and continued development of the Club, RUSC will continue to advocate for an indoor turf field in Rockland, acknowledging that at the current time this type of project is a stretch goal and would be contingent on financial and administrative assistance from both other community groups and government/private industry.

## **6. Running inclusive and cost-effective programming**

RUSC is in a stable financial position at the current time and continuing on this path is integral to this specific goal and the overall viability of the Club in the long term. Currently, at the heart of RUSC is our recreational programming that is affordable and accessible for our local community, from kids to adults. Whatever future development goals of the Club are at a competitive level, providing affordable programming in Clarence-Rockland at a recreational level will still serve as the heart of what we do for the foreseeable future. RUSC will need to continue to maintain fiscal prudence and seek funding and sponsorship opportunities where available to enable us to meet this objective.

### **Implementation of the Plan**

The Plan outlines RUSC's broad strategic direction, and further work will need to be done to operationalize this direction; both through other planning mechanisms highlighted below and through yearly work planning exercises.

### **Linkage between the Strategic Plan and other planning mechanisms**

Through the course of developing the Strategic Plan, the Board has recognized a number of specific areas of focus that would benefit from more detailed direction, and will endeavor to develop associated plans and policies over the next 9 months to complete the planning process. Executing these individual, operational plans will be critical to achieving the broad objectives set out in the Strategic Plan:

- Technical Plan – Player Development
  - Core objective - Develop our players at all levels.
  - Core objective – u10 team in 2 years.
- Technical Plan – Coach Development
  - Core objective – Slowly expanding our roster of coaches with enhanced training and qualifications.
- Referee Development Plan
  - Core objective – Maintain current referee levels.
  - Core objective – Provide growth opportunities for interested referees.
- Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Plan
  - Core objective – Recruiting 2-3 new board members: Secretary, Adult Program, Rep Teams, Equipment Manager.
  - Core objective – Recruiting 10 new coaches per year at all levels whilst maintaining 80% of previous years coaches.

- Administrative Plan
  - Core objective – Staff being able to focus on high-priority items versus needing to step in and complete duties usually undertaken by volunteers.
- Facilities Plan
  - Core objective – Identify and cost out replacement facilities with a focus on office/storage space.

### **Review of the Plan**

This Plan is meant to be reviewed annually at the beginning of each calendar year, to assess how we are achieving our strategic objectives and how we might need to adjust our operations as necessary to meet the objectives.

### **Conclusion**

Advancing the 6 Strategic Objectives outlined in the plan will support us in building a strong organizational culture which will continue to reap benefits for RUSC and its members; it will attract both players and volunteers to the organization, it will contribute to a willingness to dedicate time and resources to technical development, it enhances the positive profile of our organization in the community, and contributes to the growth of the sport locally.