



## USPC 2020: A Strategic Vision for the Next Five Years

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC), is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that develops character, leadership, confidence, and a sense of community through a program that teaches the care of horses and ponies, riding, and mounted sports. The USPC Program is available to and accessible by an inter-generational community of equine enthusiasts and includes the following attributes:

- An instructional program supported by mounted and unmounted lessons at all levels;
- Horse Management program incorporated into instruction and reinforced through USPC competitions;
- Multiple forms of membership accommodate broad range of age groups and equestrian disciplines;
- Use of technology to connect members and enhance educational opportunities;
- Trained and capable volunteers to implement the USPC program at the local, regional, and national levels.

To develop a new five-year strategic vision for USPC (2016-2020), the Strategic Planning Committee sought to develop a series of short- and long-term goals based in six strategic areas:

- **Our Education**
- **Our People**
- **Our Safety**
- **Our Sport**
- **Our Networks and Communication**
- **Our Sustainability**

These six areas were identified as core organizational values through extensive consultation of USPC leadership, staff, and members. The goals for each area are intended to be trans-organizational and reflect the core values and participation life-cycle of our members. Goals include current areas of organizational strength, areas requiring additional development, and opportunities for USPC expansion or collaboration. For each strategic area, the Strategic Planning Committee sought to establish goals that were Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (S.M.A.R.T) to facilitate evaluation of progress towards the stated goals. Short-term goals are defined as those that can be met in 1 to 3 years; long-term goals are defined as those that can be achieved in 3 to 5 years.

### Strategic Area I: Education

The USPC program is intended to educate and develop horsemanship skills; however, it is clear that the development of skills that are transferable to non-Pony Club pursuits (also referred to as “life skills”) are highly valued by former, current, and potential members. Therefore, the Strategic Area of Education

includes two sub-categories: Horsemanship Skills and Transferable Skills. Goals pertaining to Horsemanship Skills focus on member preparation for certifications and consistent application of the Standards of Proficiency across USPC activities. Goals for the Transferable Skills sub-category emphasize improved awareness of this aspect of USPC's educational program and increased utilization of leadership and skills development opportunities among members and volunteers.

**Education: Horsemanship – Short-Term Goals**

- 1. Develop and implement strategies to foster members' preparation for and progression through the Standards of Proficiency.**
- 2. Increase availability and utilization of online resources to convey uniform messaging regarding the standards of Proficiency and expectations for USPC activities.**
- 3. 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.**
- 4. Develop and implement strategies to facilitate participation of Club and Riding Center Members in USPC activities.**
  - 4a. Develop best practices for clubs and centers to ensure timely certification of members within three to six months of becoming an active member.*
  - 4b. Develop and test pilot policies for horse sharing during a) mounted lessons, b) lower-level certifications, and c) mounted rallies. Assess practicality and utility of pilot policies by surveying instructors, examiners, horse management judges, discipline judges, members, and Center and regional leaders.*

**Education: Horsemanship – Long-Term Goal**

- 1. Adapt USPC curriculum for utilization by related organizations (e.g., PATH, Locust Trace, eXtension HorseQuest, etc.).**
  - 1a. Continue to assess feasibility through assessment of pilot initiatives.*
  - 1b. Develop a strategy to package existing curriculum for various audiences.*

**Education: Transferable Skills – Short-Term Goals**

- 1. Increase awareness within and outside USPC as an organization through which members and volunteers can develop skills valued beyond equestrian sport.**
- 2. Increase member and volunteer utilization of opportunities to develop leadership and management skills.**
  - 2a. Conduct survey of upper level members to determine current awareness of opportunities and gauge interest.*
  - 2b. Increase utilization of USPC scholarship opportunities.*

**Education: Transferable Skills – Long-Term Goal**

- 1. Increase retention/longevity of member and volunteer involvement by facilitating progression through different roles within USPC.**

## Strategic Area II: Our People

Successful implementation of the USPC program is dependent upon the people within the organization, both volunteer leaders and compensated personnel. The Strategic Area of Our People recognizes the critical role of these individuals in the member's experience in USPC and establishes goals to improve the training and retention of volunteer leaders and compensated personnel.

### **Our People: Volunteers – Short-Term Goals**

- 1. Establish the number of current volunteers that support USPC's activities at the national, regional and local levels.**
  - 1a. Conduct a pilot sampling at local, regional, and national levels to establish quantities.*
- 2. 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.**
- 3. Develop and implement strategies to retain volunteers by providing resources to facilitate delegation by regional and local officers.**
  - 3a. Determine specific tasks for each volunteer position at the regional and local level.*
  - 3b. Determine solutions to resolve issues related to program administration.*
- 4. Continue to expand USPC's volunteer base by creating a positive leadership environment among national, regional, and local layers using a variety of communication strategies.**
- 5. Improve acknowledgment of volunteers.**
  - 5a. Increase awareness and encourage utilization of existing programs to acknowledge local volunteers.*
  - 5b. Develop uniform process for nominating, awarding, and announcing Local Legends.*
  - 5c. Utilize Advisory Committee and Volunteer Development Committee as resource for volunteer acknowledgment opportunities.*

### **Our People: Volunteers – Long-Term Goals**

- 1. Improve the onboarding process for new volunteer leaders by developing and implementing a DC/RS mentorship program and orientation.**
- 2. Lengthen the average retention of regional and local officers to at least three consecutive years.**

### **Our People: Compensated Personnel – Short-Term Goals**

- 1. Define pool of current talent within the National Office and identify skills needed for future/emerging efforts.**
  - 1a. Determine opportunities to develop skills of existing staff and define appropriate strategies for filling gaps.*
- 2. Foster professional development of National Office staff.**
  - 2a. Establish budget for staff development and training activities.*
  - 2b. Offer one professional development program per year beginning in 2017.*
  - 2c. Identify opportunities for employees to pursue leadership roles in professional organizations.*

- 3. Ensure consistent application of the USPC program at sponsored activities (e.g., rallies, certifications, mounted and unmounted meetings, camps, clinics, etc.).**
  - 3a. Access current lists of approved/qualified officials from other organizations and ensure these lists are readily accessible to activity organizers*
  - 3b. Establish and maintain list of qualified instructors for USPC activities and make available to activity organizers.*
  - 3c. Provide consistent training opportunities for instructors and approved/qualified officials for USPC activities to ensure familiarity with current USPC rules and Standards of Proficiency.*
  - 3d. Establish budget and seek funding for training and development opportunities for USPC instructors and non-licensed officials.*
- 4. Develop and implement strategy to acknowledge compensated personnel.**

### **Strategic Area III: Safety**

USPC establishes policies to enhance the safety of riders and horses during mounted and unmounted activities. The goals in the Strategic Area of Safety are intended to maintain the organization's role as a leader in this area through development of enhanced safety policies and educational materials, data collection, and key partnerships with other equestrian organizations.

#### **Safety – Short-Term Goals**

- 1. Continue USPC's role as a leader among equestrian organizations by providing educational resources regarding safe and proper horse and rider equipment fit and use.**
  - 1a. Develop and provide educational materials (including written material, webinars and online training modules) regarding proper fit and use of helmets, safety vests (protective and inflatable), tack, and footwear.*
  - 1b. Incorporate safety education goals throughout the USPC Standards of Proficiency.*
  - 1c. Reinforce safety education through Horse Management Handbook and implementation of horse management program at all USPC activities.*
- 2. Increase compliance with filing of incident reports.**
  - 2a. Include familiarity with and completion of USPC Incident Reports in the H-A Standard of Proficiency.*
  - 2b. Develop webinar and online training module to improve awareness and utilization of incident report forms and resulting data.*
- 3. Develop educational materials regarding how to choose the appropriate mount for the rider and the activity in which that pair will participate.**
  - 3a. Develop list of measurable qualities for buyers and lessees to look for in a mount.*
  - 3b. Develop and provide educational materials regarding why it is important that a mount have good ground manners and expected proper behavior under saddle.*
  - 3c. Develop and provide educational materials regarding suitable training for a horse to help them achieve desirable ground manners and an expected response to an expected cue from the rider.*

### Safety – Long-Term Goals

- 1. Extend USPC's reputation as a leader in the development of safety policies and standards for youth populations.**
  - 1a. Evaluate appropriateness of aligning USPC safety policies and practices with national standards for our unique population
  - 1b. Implement continuous evaluation of USPC rulebooks and policies relative to safety on the ground and in the saddle.
  - 1c. Work with other equestrian organizations to update "Every Time, Every Ride."
- 2. Establishment of partnership(s) to conduct medical study(ies) of accident to injury ratio in youth equestrian activities.**
  - 2a. Recruit expert(s) in traumatic brain injuries to serve as resource(s) to the Safety Committee.
- 3. Ensure a designated USPC representative/liaison to the safety committees of other US equestrian organizations.**

### **Strategic Area IV: Equestrian Sport**

USPC activities allow members to demonstrate knowledge gained through the educational program in a wide range of equestrian sports. Recognizing that there has been a decline in upper level member participation in these activities, the goals in the Strategic Area of Equestrian Sport seek ways to engage this core population and ensure continued progression through the membership life cycle.

### Equestrian Sport – Short-Term Goals

- 1. Increase participation of upper level (HB and above) members in Pony Club activities, including Championships and Festival.**
  - 1a. Survey current upper level members to identify opportunities that would be of greatest interest to this audience.
- 2. Improve coordination with sister organizations regarding competition schedules to minimize major conflicts that decrease participation in USPC activities.**
  - 2a. Develop best practices for incorporating USPC activities into existing events and activities.
  - 2b. Host "USPC Information Events" at sister organization events to increase awareness of USPC opportunities.
  - 2c. Invite other equestrian organizations to participate in USPC competitions.
- 3. Increase opportunities for USPC teams in team challenges beyond USPC Championships and Festival.**

### Equestrian Sport – Long-Term Goal

- 1. Develop a pool of "Pony Club-friendly" instructors and officials.**
- 2. Develop more robust interactions and collaborations with Pony Club International Alliance.**

## Strategic Area V: Networks & Communications

The Strategic Area of Networks & Communications establishes goals intended to facilitate an individual's progression through the member and volunteer life cycle, establish consistent connections with alumni who may or may not continue to be involved with equestrian sports, and expand USPC's reach into other equestrian organizations.

### Networks & Communications – Short-Term Goals

1. **Activate/reactivate social media groups for current and former USPC members and volunteers at all strata (national/regional/local).**
2. **Encourage USPC members to participate on Youth Councils or Advisory Councils of other equestrian and professional organizations at all strata (national/regional/local).**
3. **Advertise and utilize the "Educational Symposium hosted by USPC, Inc." Annual Meeting as an opportunity for professional networking opportunity for current and former members and volunteers as well as non-USPC and non-equestrian professionals**
4. **Expand the USPC Pin Promise to venues and opportunities beyond equestrian competitions.**

### Networks & Communications – Long-Term Goals

1. **Assess and develop new membership models and methods of packaging USPC curriculum ("product") for use outside of traditional clubs/centers.**

## Strategic Area VI: Our Sustainability

Successful implementation of the Pony Club program and Strategic Areas I through V requires the organization and its leadership to demonstrate fiscal responsibility, ability to adapt program deliverables to the changing needs and landscape of equestrian education and sport, and effectively define the Pony Club brand to retain current members and recruit new members and partnerships. The goals within Strategic Area VI: Our Sustainability seek to enhance organizational accountability in these three areas.

### A. Financial Sustainability of Pony Club

Organizational sustainability begins with financial security. Therefore, the short- and long-term goals in the subcategory of Financial Sustainability emphasize financial stability, fiscal accountability, revenue growth and fundraising.

#### Short-Term Goals

1. **Develop and adhere to the development, review, and approval of three-year budgets for the national organization.**
2. **Increase transparency and awareness of Pony Club's current financial constraints among leaders and members to improve awareness of changes to existing programs and activities.**

3. *Each year, Pony Club leaders will establish attainable goals for fundraising and increase awareness among leaders and members regarding progress towards attainment of these goals throughout the year.*

#### **Long-Term Goals**

1. *Develop and implement strategy to incorporate financial planning into Pony Club's leadership culture at the national, regional, and local levels and enhance fiscal accountability for all programs.*
2. *Develop and implement strategies to increase resources within Pony Club's endowment fund.*

#### **B. Adaptability of Pony Club's Programs and Organization Structures**

Organizational sustainability is also dependent on ensuring that Pony Club's programmatic offerings and governance structures meet existing and unfulfilled needs of our current and prospective members. The goals in the subcategory of Organizational Adaptability emphasize strategies to develop and deliver a Pony Club program relevant to a broad range of audiences, both within and tangential to the equestrian community.

#### **Short-Term Goals**

1. *Conduct a review of the strategic goals of equestrian organizations to determine distinct offerings and programmatic overlap to determine potential partnerships.*
2. *Clearly define products that differentiate Pony Club from other equestrian programs and other youth programs.*

#### **Long-Term Goals**

1. *Develop and implement customizable plans to engage other equestrian organizations in strategic partnerships that retains current Pony Club members and recruits new members.*
2. *Convene an ad hoc Task Force to explore ways to increase the relevance of the Pony Club education program to a) meet the needs of the current models of equestrian competition, and b) meet the needs of agriculture/equine business education.*

#### **C. Communicating the Pony Club Brand**

Uniform branding and organizational communications play a key role in organizational sustainability because they frequently serve as the first point of contact between Pony Club and potential members and partner organizations. The goals in subcategory of Communicating the Pony Club Brand seek to establish strategies to foster clear messaging of the Pony Club program and enhance outreach to new potential partners.

#### **Short-Term Goals**

1. *Develop and implement new communication strategies to demonstrate the benefits and opportunities available through Pony Club membership to a broad range of audiences.*

2. *Promote and increase awareness of centralized and readily accessible resource of Marketing and Communications guidelines and materials for Pony Club leaders and partners. (no need to re-do what is already done) – one stop resource*
3. *Evaluate current delivery of materials to members and the public. Explore strategies to link access to educational materials with different membership categories.*

**Long-Term Goals**

1. *Establish [www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org) as the “go-to” website for educational resources related to equine management and care, equestrian sports, and riding instruction while also promoting different membership opportunities*
2. *Explore feasibility of generating materials that would convert interest in USPC materials and activities into action in terms of membership.*