



# National survey of the playing of netball in the United States

Towards a national strategic plan for the development and delivery of netball in the United States (a summary)

# Acknowledgement

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This survey could not have been possible without the support and help from the United States of America Netball Association (USA Netball). It was conceived on the back of an association under a new presidency with a new management team and revised constitution.

As the only governing association that is recognized for the governance, ownership and control of netball within the United States of America by the International Netball Federation (INF) and the Americas Federation of Netball Associations (AFNA), USA Netball embarked on a 'root and branch' analysis of the awareness, playing and administration of netball across the United States. This survey is the first of many such processes being put in place to better understand the playing of netball in the USA to support the longer-term development of the sport within the United States of America.

We therefore thank all those who participated in this initial process, especially those who took the time to complete the survey questions; we are that much richer for your responses.

USA Netball thanks the respondents and will now move towards the development and implementation of key areas of activities arising from the responses to the survey.

# Forward by the President of USA Netball

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The United States of America Netball Association (USA Netball) is the only internationally recognized National Association for the governance and leadership of netball in the USA by *The International Netball Federation (INF)*. We instigated this national survey of the sport of netball as we wanted to better understand the awareness, playing and administration of netball across the United States. We wanted to hear from a wide range of people – in the sport as well as outside the sport. It was a mammoth task, which we felt was necessary as a start in pulling together a forward looking and effective strategy for the game over the next 10 years.

When I was elected President of USA Netball in 2017, I began instituting changes that would place USA Netball on the world netball stage. We knew then – as we do now – that it would take some time, committed individuals and creative opportunities.

On behalf of the Board of the USA Netball, I am delighted to be able to begin a process of re-establishing and embedding the sport of netball across the United States and hope that those in the game will lend their support to the new direction of travel envisaged as a result of the responses we have received through this first phase. It is an exciting time for netball right now.

Netball is growing in popularity at an unprecedented rate throughout the world. The Vitality Netball World Cup that took place in July 2019, Liverpool, England, is further testimony of not only the quality of the sport but of the interest that the sport is now generating, with now over 40 countries ranked and a further 6 countries waiting to be ranked. The USA is one of the ranked countries and, through our new approach, we want to see the USA ranked within the top twenty by 2029. A tall order some may say, but one we know we can achieve given the level of commitment we now have within the Association. This report provides a strong and extremely helpful first phase foundation in getting us to that position.

Yours in netball,



**Patrick Heron**

President

USA Netball Association

# INTRODUCTION

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As the national governing body of the sport of netball, the United States of America Netball Association (USA Netball) wanted to better understand the level of awareness and the playing of netball across the United States of America and one way reach as many and varied spectrum of those involved (and showing interest) was to undertake a survey that would seek to identify, as a first principle, how far across the United States netball was being played (or at least where there was some awareness).

Underpinning the survey was the need for USA Netball to 'come out of the shadows', to raise its head above the parapet and to strategically plan for the development of netball in the USA – including taking the USA Netball Team to the top of the netball rankings over the next 10 years. The survey was a first step in understanding how the 'land lay' as the Association embarked on a wide-ranging 'root and branch' analysis of the awareness, playing and administration of netball across the United States. This survey was conceived as a first phase 'base-line' capture of what was understood to be the state of netball in the USA.

The survey's objectives were:

- To start mapping the netballing land scape in the USA in order to develop netball across the United States;
- To understand the degree of awareness, playing and administration of netball across the United States;
- To support the strategic planning process of USA Netball.

This report provides a brief summary of the results of the survey and some steps that have so far been taken by USA Netball to implement some of the implications.

## Method, challenges and characteristics of respondents

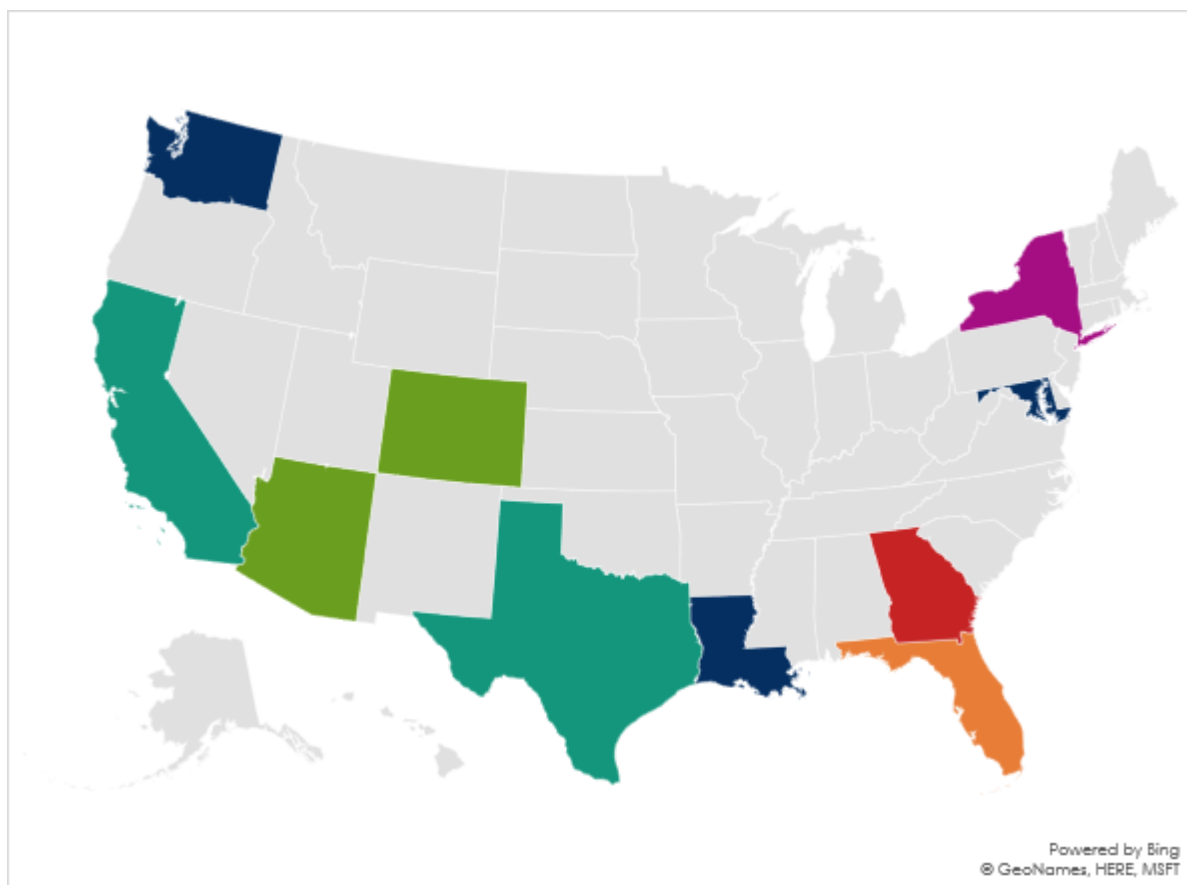
The survey was conducted using an on-line survey tool between May and June 2019. By the close of the survey in mid-June, we had received responses from just over 100 directly contacted clubs and stakeholders across the USA of which some were not affiliated to USA Netball

In broad terms:

- ☐ 75% female and 25% male
- ☐ 9% of respondents were under the age of 24yrs with 72% between 25 – 54yrs
- ☐ 84% of respondents were USA citizen and/or Green Card holders
- ☐ 26% of respondents were still playing netball
- ☐ 69% of respondents were aware that the USA was one of the ranked netballing nations;

- ❑ 25% played in some form of recognized league/competitions with 11% saying they played in one-off tournaments/competitions
- ❑ 80% indicated playing netball and/or still involved in the game for over 10yrs;
- ❑ 55% of respondents started playing netball at local clubs in out-of-school settings while the majority of those who were born overseas – but now a USA citizen - played at school level with only 19% saying they played at university level (again the majority were none-USA born)
- ❑ 29% of respondents were ex-international players, including quite a few who had played for the USA national team
- ❑ 40% of respondents indicated that they were ‘administrators’ within their respective clubs, 25% said they were coaches and 35% were ‘Board members’ of clubs.
- ❑ The majority of responses came from the state of Florida (24%) followed by New York (See Fig 1).

**Fig 1: States that had respondents**



*Source: National Survey in the playing of netball in the United States, May 2019*

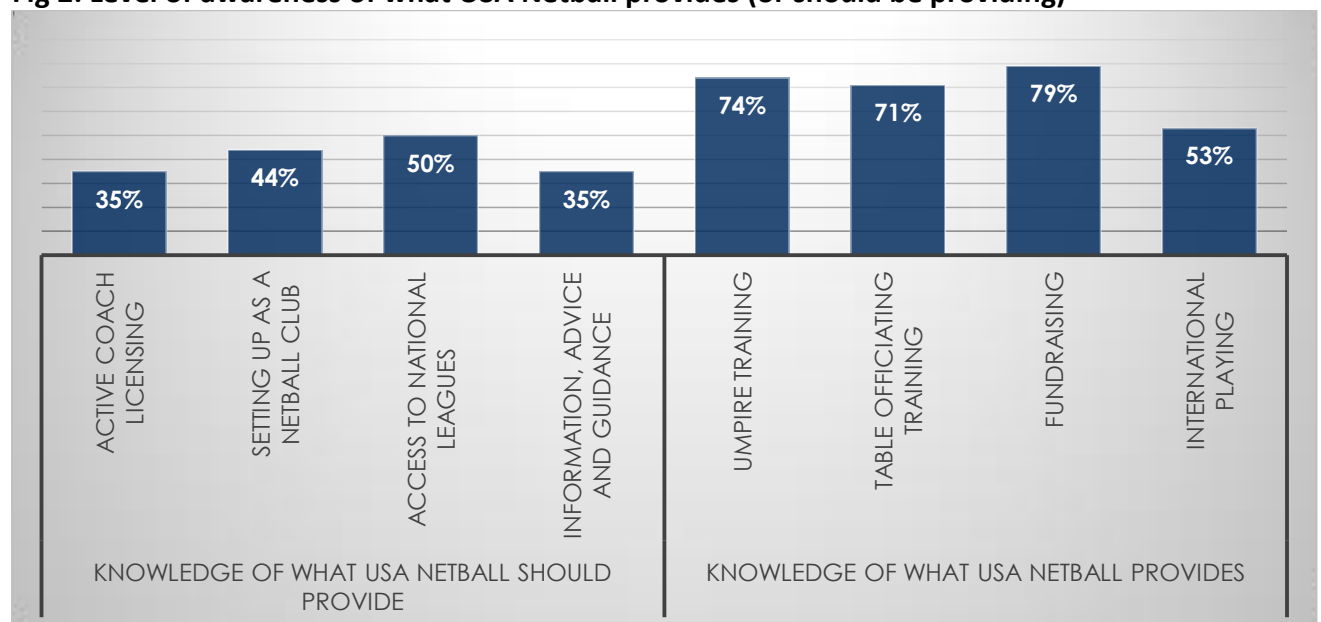
## WHAT DID THE SURVEY TELL US?

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their club was registered with either (or both) their State Association or USA Netball: 29% said they were registered with their state association but only 27% were with USA Netball. However, close on half (44%) indicated that they had not heard of either.

The majority of respondents indicated that they received resource information on-line (40%). More people indicated they '*muddled through*' (14%) than go through either their State Association (13%) or USA Netball (8%). No one indicated accessing the regional body (i.e. AFNA).

Focusing on what USA Netball should offer, respondents' awareness indicated the following shown in Fig 2.

**Fig 2: Level of awareness of what USA Netball provides (or should be providing)**



## WHAT DID RESPONDENTS SAY?

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We asked respondents to provide comments through open-ended questions. From this, four key themes emerged (see Fig 3):

- 1. Promotion and marketing**
- 2. Training and development**
- 3. Governance and leadership**
- 4. Partnership working**

Underpinning each of the themes were two recurring perspectives which we have loosely categorised as:

- ***Supportive and encouraging; and***
- ***Areas for development and improvements.***

The comments included:

*“INF does not licence coaches [it is the domain of the recognized national associations].”*

*“USA Netball must continue the work they're doing as it is a step in the right direction for growing the sport of netball within the United States.”*

*“Make people more aware of the sport on a national level. There are many communities that have never heard of this sport.”*

*“I’m familiar with the politics of USA Netball and Netball America. It’s messy and confusing - I just started a club to educate Americans and play the game with no fuss.”*

*“[to] provide adequate resources and a continuous fostering and training individuals correctly so that their state can become competitive as well as broaden the playing and teaching of the sport to all persons/genders.”*

*“...[establish] a local state league that will help fuel the national program. Also, we can use the state league to visit new cities and play the sport as a means of marketing and branding. This will attract new players, members and ultimately grow Netball within Florida!”*

Fig 3: Overview of the emerging themes from the survey





## HOW HAS THE SURVEY INFORMED THE DIRECTION OF USA NETBALL?

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USA Netball will be:

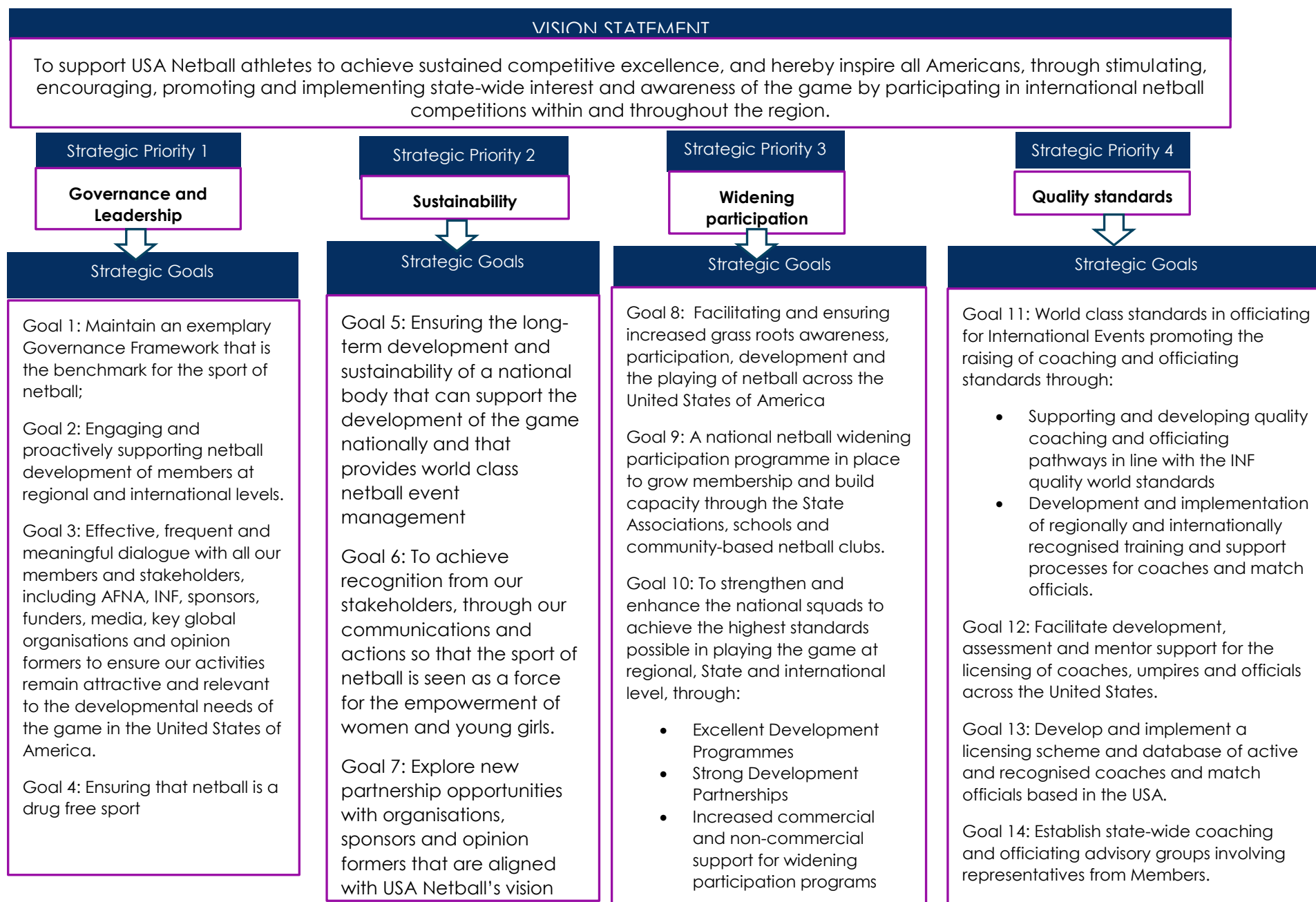
1. Engaging and proactively supporting netball development of members at regional and international levels;
2. Aiming to achieve recognition from stakeholders, through effective communications and actions so that the sport of netball is seen as a force for the empowerment of women and young girls;
3. Presenting a national netball widening participation program to be put in place to grow membership and build capacity through the State Associations, schools and community-based netball clubs;
4. Developing and implementing a licensing scheme and database of active and recognised coaches and match officials who live and work in the USA.

Specifically, in supporting the netball community and in educating the wider public on the game, this means that the revised strategic plan (Fig 4) will provide direction over the next 10yrs through the following four strategic priorities mediated through 14 operational goals (or objectives):

- ***Strategic priority 1: Governance & Leadership***
- ***Strategic priority 2: Sustainability***
- ***Strategic priority 3: Widening participation***
- ***Strategic priority 4: Quality standards***

Over the next 18mths, USA Netball will be embarking on a program that will build on the outcome of the survey. This is presented as Fig 5.

**Fig 4: The emerging strategic plan: 2019 – 2025 (indicative)**



**Fig 5: USA Netball's Operational priorities: July 2019 to December 2020**



**Analysis completed by  
FW Business Ltd in partnership with USA Netball, September 2019**