

# NIRSA Strategic Map

National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association  
Endorsed by the NIRSA Board of Directors  
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**NIRSA**

**NATIONAL INTRAMURAL-RECREATIONAL SPORTS ASSOCIATION**

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# Strategic Map

## Preamble

This document outlines and articulates the operating principles that guide the Association in the achievement of its strategic goals. It is a perpetual work-in-progress and a compact, interactive process between members and organizational leaders. It directs the organization in development of a vision, and of working philosophies that will help NIRSA realize that vision. As our association evolves—both through internal dynamic as well as external influences—this document will change with it, serving as a communication vehicle to promote further cooperation and collaboration among all members, for the benefit of the Association and the field of recreational sports.

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## Strategic Mapping

A strategic map assists the organization in recognizing directions and priorities that best serve the membership. It allows the Board of Directors to identify and concentrate their efforts on member-identified programs and services. The foundation for the strategic map is provided by NIRSA Vision and Mission Statements:

### Mission Statement

The mission of the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association is to provide for the education and development of professional and student members and to foster quality recreational programs, facilities and services for diverse populations. NIRSA demonstrates its commitment to excellence by utilizing resources which promote ethical and healthy lifestyle choices.

### Vision Statement

The National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) is committed to be recognized internationally as the leader in recreation within higher education, dedicated to excellence in student and professional development, education, research and standards. NIRSA's commitment, creativity and strategic partnerships are consistently demonstrated through outstanding programs, facilities and services.

# A Strategic Operating Process

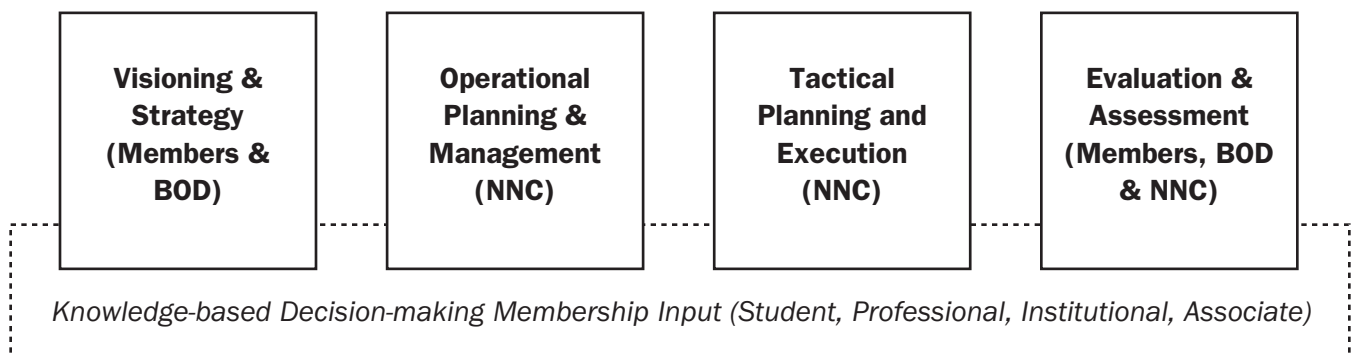
For clarification, throughout this Strategic Map, the term “marketing” may be used and/or implied in one of several ways. Marketing in the traditional sense is a set of activities, or a mix of decisions (on products, pricing, place/distribution, and promotion), that creates and communicates a transfer of value between NIRSA, our membership, and the outside world. In another sense, NIRSA “marketing” is focused on building equity in the NIRSA brand, and enhancing its position in the mindset of members and nonmembers alike. Finally, and in the broadest sense, NIRSA’s “marketing communication” implies the integration of these elements together, so that NIRSA presents a consistent image and speaks with one “voice.”

As the Association has become more complex, and its array of products, services and programs larger and more complicated, it is important to continuously apply two criteria to all of the Association’s marketing activities:

1. Is this activity strategic? Does it relate to and support the strategic, long-term priorities of the organization (i.e., does it create value for the member)?
2. Does this activity integrate with other strategic activities? Does this activity, when examined against other activities going on in the Association, seem to fit in logically in the overall pattern of things?

For this reason, a Strategic Operating Process that guides the Association from strategic planning to the delivery of products, programs and services is essential. The purpose of the Strategic Operating Process (illustrated below) is to ensure that most if not all of the Association’s activities are strategic and integrated whenever possible. The process has five basic components; when Board, staff, and members are clear about the process for each component and their appropriate roles, higher degrees of collaboration and performance will be achieved.

## A Strategic Operating Process by which the Association Will Deliver Products, Services and Benefits



### **Visioning and Strategy**

Strategic planning begins with clearly defined processes and roles, adequate support from the Board, a clearly articulated vision, and a set of criteria for priority setting.

### **Operational Planning & Management**

This is the interface where the Board hands off the strategic priorities to staff. At this point, staff is responsible for developing the broad operation plans in major program areas and initiatives. These are generally referred to as “business plans” or “comprehensive marketing plans” in key areas such as membership, professional development, fundraising, research development and publications.

### **Tactical Planning and Execution**

It is at the tactical level that the staff conducts the final phase of preparation leading directly to “hands-on” execution. At the tactical level, the details (budget, promotion schedule, et cetera) are clearly outlined for a specific event. An important feature of a tactical plan is that it allows integration across programs. During the tactical planning phase, staff asks, “How does this activity integrate with other strategic activities? Does this activity, when examined against other activities in the Association, seem to fit in logically in the overall pattern of things?”

### **Evaluation and Assessment**

NIRSA will offer valid data and assessment above and beyond anecdotal information to demonstrate benefits of membership and the positive impact of NIRSA’s programs. Without a system for evaluation and assessment, the Association has no objective way to determine how well it is meeting its members’ needs. Furthermore, without such a system the Board and staff members cannot assess their own performance in relation to the most important metric of all, the members.

### **Knowledge-based Decision-making**

An association’s decision-making is only as good as the quality of the data, information and insights it has about its members, markets, competitors, and the external operating environment. In order for an association to move toward knowledge-based decision-making, the information must be of good quality, offering documented and readily accessible guidance and insights for active use by Board and staff alike. The power of the knowledge-based decision-making process is that it provides an overall sense of “clarity” about the association. When information is documented, widely used, and freely shared, the Board, staff, and members all can achieve a clearer understanding of organizational functions and processes.

**Fiduciary Philosophy**

NIRSA's Board of Directors and staff shall incorporate the NIRSA Funding Guidelines (see NIRSA's Policy and Resource Manual for complete Funding Guidelines text) to serve as a template in determining priorities for the use of the Association's resources. The four guiding principles inherent to the model are:

- NIRSA's Mission Statement
- Strategic Map
- Vision Statement
- Ten Guiding Principles:

In defining the Financial Planning Direction of our Association, ultimately, consideration for funding programs and services must be supported by one or more of the areas identified in NIRSA's Funding Guidelines.

*“NIRSA is the leading resource for professional and student development, education, and research in collegiate recreational sports.”*

# I. NIRSA’S Desired Image and Strategic Position

NIRSA will be the higher education association that sets levels of performance for programs, facilities, and professionals in the collegiate market, to ensure that recreation programs offer the most memorable experiences and opportunities for achievement. NIRSA will be the leading resource for data, education, training, assessment, and structured professional and student development in the field of recreational sports. NIRSA will also be the higher education organization that enables its members to bring together the many decision-makers on campus and empower them with the latest research and processes. NIRSA will utilize its resources to proactively create partnerships that support and enhance its strategic goals.

**To achieve the Desired Image and Strategic Position, NIRSA will operate from strategic priorities in three interrelated Strategic Domains:**

***Strategic Domain #1:** NIRSA applies the research and standards for recreational professionals, programs, and facilities, and develops the corresponding volume of knowledge and levels of performance.*

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Define and apply a set of standards for programs and facilities, which would include an assessment program and possibly a more formal, pass/fail accreditation program.
- Raise the standards of professionalism for individuals through structured professional development programs and continuing education, with the concurrent application of a clearly defined and regularly updated body of professional competencies.
- Explore a certification/registry program that incorporates:
  - Employment position within collegiate recreational sports field
  - Participation in National School of Recreational Sports Management (NSRSM), Symposia, and Institutes
  - Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
  - Membership in NIRSA
  - Involvement and volunteerism within field of collegiate recreational sports
  - Credit for attending relevant educational sessions at the NIRSA Annual Conference, NSRSM, Symposia, and Institutes
  - Credit for attending relevant educational sessions at bona fide non-NIRSA Annual Conference, NSRSM, Symposia, and Institutes

- A quantitative point system
- Maintain and distribute operational data from benchmarking research.
- Utilize NIRSA-related programs such as the Sports Officials Development Program (SODP) to set standards for training throughout campus recreation and related practice areas.
- Utilize NIRSA publications to set and document standards, as well as educate members and related practitioners on standards and good practices.
- Form partnerships with other professional organizations, agencies, and allies to help NIRSA achieve prominence in standards setting and influence.

**Strategic Domain #2:** *NIRSA provides the information and members convene the forums that bring together the many players and decision-makers on campus.*

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Implement timely and trusted research, driven from the Association's established, adopted research priorities.
- Support members in convening forums for relationship building and partnership creation.
- Utilize directories and database capabilities to bring together the players and decision-makers on campus.
- Build relationships on campus, and create alliances.
- Demonstrate the value of campus recreation to an institution's success.

**Strategic Domain #3:** *NIRSA possesses the space where vendors, suppliers, consultants, and sponsors connect with decision-makers.*

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Educate stakeholders so all can understand the multi-faceted aspects of the Association's complex decision-making processes.
- Provide timely and trusted research specific to vendors, suppliers, consultants, and sponsors.
- Support Associate Members in convening forums for relationship building and partnership creation.
- Define and apply benchmarks for industry standards.
- Utilize alliances to advance the profession.
- Define the model for all sponsorship opportunities.

## II. Operational and Governance Values

### Operational Values

Together, the Board and staff will use their management structure, operational expertise, and innovation to manage the Association and deliver products, services, and benefits. Associations that employ organizational strength in the execution of projects empower staff members through information, direction, and collaboration.

**To uphold its Operational Values, NIRSA board members and staff working together as a team are enabled by strategic priorities in two interrelated Strategic Domains:**

***Strategic Domain #1:** NIRSA will provide documentation that provides a sound knowledge base for decisions and actions.*

Initiatives in the area may include:

- Provide written tactical plans that are routinely developed and used in collaborative planning sessions among staff.

***Strategic Domain #2:** NIRSA will develop a coordinated effort between programs and between individuals to deliver better value to members and other constituents.*

Initiatives in the area may include:

- Collaborate with the NSC to generate revenue streams and partnership opportunities for Sport Club Championships and extramural events through sponsorship opportunities.
- Foster quality recreation programs, facilities or constituent services for a diverse population.
- Strengthen or promote the quality of NIRSA services within the role of higher education.
- Provide for the growth of NIRSA and achieve synergy with other existing programs both internal to and external to NIRSA.
- Maintain an “inventory of opportunities” and a pricing structure for each.

## Governance Values

The governance body will delegate the Association's management functions to staff through the executive director, and fully utilize governance resources and members for contributions of expertise, knowledge, experience, vision, and strategy. The NIRSA Board of Directors will lead the organization, make deliberate choices, and map the strategy of NIRSA. Members and partners will contribute their expertise and knowledge to the success of the organization.

**To uphold its Governance Values, NIRSA will operate from strategic priorities in two interrelated Strategic Domains:**

***Strategic Domain #1:** NIRSA will evolve a governance structure to best support strategic decision-making and to achieve effective member input and accountability.*

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Revise committee structure
- Revise Board structure
  - Pursue broader representation and knowledge-based representation.
  - Extend length of terms
  - Reduce Board turnover
- Organize efforts to recruit and prepare leaders to serve on the Board.
- Revise membership voting process, evaluation:
  - Time of year voting occurs
  - Method and process by which voting occurs
  - Individual voting versus institutional voting
- Mitigate officer and director liability exposure while serving on board.

***Strategic Domain #2:** NIRSA will use its governance resources—including the NIRSA Board of Directors, the Board of Directors of the NSC, the Foundation Board of Directors, all committees and work teams, and the membership—to set priorities, strategies, and policies.*

## III. Research Agenda

NIRSA's desired position is to be a clearinghouse of data for recreational sports programs, services, and facilities. NIRSA will leverage its assets and resources to collect and conduct research based on the following strategic research domains, developed with input from the NIRSA research committee, membership, and staff, and adopted by the board of directors.

**NIRSA will develop its research agenda from the following three interrelated Strategic Domains:**

***Strategic Domain # 1:** NIRSA will develop standards and knowledge bases in content areas significant to the field of collegiate recreational sports.*

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Develop indoor and outdoor facility standards and guidelines that include:
  - Occupancy limits
  - Space, location, dimensions
  - Materials used, e.g. flooring, lighting
  - Programmatic uses
  - Technology applications
  - New facility construction guidelines: check-off sheet
- Develop programmatic standards and guidelines that include:
  - Cost and fee structure policies
  - Technology applications
  - Demographic data
  - Collaboration with other units, departments, and entities
  - Participation barriers
  - Member/participant satisfaction and expectations
  - Marketing
- Develop employee certification licensure, training standards and guidelines that include;
  - Safety, e.g., CPR, First Aid, AED, and First Responder
  - Instruction: personal training, officiating, fitness class instructor
  - Supervision: summer camps, building staff, lifeguards

**Strategic Domain # 2:** *NIRSA will assess the benefits of recreational sports facilities, services and programs as they relate to college and university students, faculty and staff with regard to:*

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Performance — academic
- Development = personal, leadership
- Alumni loyalty

**Strategic Domain # 3:** *NIRSA will assess marketplace value of its members and participants.*

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Examine buying power of recreational sports professionals.
- Development of budgetary and financial standardized guidelines with regard to:
  - University funding standards, guidelines, and criteria
  - Programmatic fee structures, costs
  - Available resources such as sponsorships, endowments, et cetera
  - Fund-raising initiatives

## IV. Membership Initiatives

As a membership organization, supported by members for the benefit of members, NIRSA recognizes the significance of maintaining a strong and vibrant membership base, comprised of renewing and new members.

Through development and support of recruitment/retention programs, NIRSA leads recreational sports on college campuses to a strategic position for the Association as a whole, and its members as individuals.

**NIRSA will provide deliberate and progressive opportunities that enhance recruitment, development and retention of members who are engaged in collegiate recreational sports programs, services, and facilities through strategic priorities in three interrelated Strategic Domains.**

***Strategic Domain #1: Member Recruitment** – NIRSA will develop and implement marketing strategies to attract new members.*

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Promote direct benefits to professional, student, and prospective members
- Promote direct benefits to Institutional Members and prospective Institutional Members.
- Promote Direct benefits to Professional and Student members of Institutional Members
- Promote direct benefits to Associate Members and prospective Associate Members who provide quality products and services that assist individual and institutional members.

***Strategic Domain #2: Member Development** — NIRSA will present educational and developmental opportunities for members in areas where clear learning outcomes can be identified.*

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Provide an Annual Conference & Recreational Sports Exposition.
- Provide specialty symposia & institutes.
- Provide the National School of Recreational Sports Management

- Provide support and encouragement for additional national, regional, state and provincial educational programs, including:
  - Regional conferences
  - State & provincial workshops
  - Student Lead Ons
  - Emerging Recreational Sports Leaders Conferences
- Provide opportunities to earn Continuing Education Units (CEU).
- Explore opportunities for alternate education, e.g., online courses, webinars, multimedia.
- Pursue avenues of credentialing.
- Provide personal and professional growth through service opportunities.
- Foster interpersonal networking opportunities.

***Strategic Domain #3: Member Retention*** – NIRSA will implement and maintain programs and services that provide for escalating needs of members.

Initiatives in this area may include:

- Develop and implement ongoing satisfaction assessments of programs and services.
- Develop and implement periodic member needs assessments.
- Provide high quality services to members, e.g.:
  - Website
  - Annual Conference
  - Career Opportunities Center (COC)
  - BluefishJobs.com
  - NIRSA publications and other resources via the NIRSA Education & Publication Center (NEPC)
  - Recreational Sports Exposition
  - National Campus Championship Series (NCCS)
  - Online Forums and Listservs

## V. Conclusion

An integrated Strategic Map creates an environment where an Association lives a strategic plan every day. Capable human resources, strategic planning, creative financing, proper marketing, and continuous research foster and develop the Association's Vision and Mission, allowing well-planned responses to potential threats and opportunities. A Strategic Map develops consensus in development of objectives throughout the leadership, and brings members of the team together in implementing the objectives. A living and evolving Strategic Map accomplishes objectives through the development of member and Board-driven goals directly related to the Vision and Mission of the Association.