



Growth Evaluation in the Midwest

The following report outlines the key challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for growing water polo in the Midwest. Based on input from various stakeholders, this report highlights strategic steps needed to enhance the sports presence and sustainability in the region.

Obstacles

Geography Logistics

- Largest designated zone makes it difficult to establish a centralized hub.
- Long travel times.
- Far travel requirements means many clubs struggle with travel costs.
- Calendar conflicts between states creates inability to collaborate and come together.

Leadership & Internal Community

- Not enough qualified coaches or referee's.
- Lack of incentives to establish and grow beyond individual stakeholder's backyard.
- Absence of USAWP and Zone leadership support and contributions to development efforts.
- New clubs are met with a hostile attitudes and excluded from events.

Facilities & Finances

- High cost to rent facilities.
- Limited access to suitable pools.
- Lack of financial support or sponsorships for clubs and tournaments.
- Expensive individual membership fees on top of club, tournament, and league fees.

Marketing & Community Outreach

- No opportunities for regular game play.
- No clinics, camps, or conference opportunities (training opportunities).
- Minimal media coverage.
- Inadequate social media
- Limited promotional means and lack of school-based support and initiatives.

Action Plan: Start Doing

- Expand Splashball & youth development programs.
- Organize more regional opportunities for competitions, camps, and clinics for athletes, coaches, and referees.
- Facilitate conversations between USAWP/Zone Board and pool facilities.
- Encouraging grassroots growth by providing resources for new teams.

Action Plan: Keep Doing

- Supporting existing events and ensuring their long-term sustainability.
- Building a stronger Midwest water polo network through improved engagement and communication.
- Offering scholarship and grant assistance to athletes and clubs.
- Utilize social media & digital marketing to increase visibility and engagement.

Action Plan: Stop Doing

- Overemphasizing JO qualification as the primary objective.
- Allowing inactive board members to remain in leadership roles.
- Ignoring the needs of smaller clubs and emerging programs.

Key Takeaways

- USAWP must take a vested and active role in the zone to drive meaningful growth and impact.
- More emphasis on grassroots programs.
- Regular In Person Training and Clinics for Officials and Coaches - With Certification Pathway
- Shift away from JO focused mentality.