



## USTA Texas Volunteer/Staff Leadership Meeting December 14, 2024, Sheraton Georgetown

### 1. Welcome and Agenda Overview

Kevin Collins welcomed everyone and thanked all for coming to the leadership onboarding training. Lara Lehmann emphasized that talent development is part of the strategic plan, and that the stakeholders called for us to invest in it. Today's goal is to build trust and transparency while teaching volunteers and staff how to work as a team and also to have some fun and get to know each other.

Bill Leong led the group in an icebreaker: *What was your first job and what did you learn from it?*

Bill went over the agenda and asked the following of those in attendance: listen to understand, lean into discomfort, have fun, keep an open mind, assume positive intent, trust the process, be honest with self and others, respect views of others, engage and participate, use confidentiality.

Bill led the group in a Mission Statement exercise: *How many words from the new Mission statement did each group know?*

### 2. Mission, Vision, Purpose Statements, Six Core Values, Strategic Priorities and Goals, and Review of Organizational Chart

Lara summarized that the Mission, Vision, Purpose statements emphasize USTA Texas' desire to grow tennis inclusively and make it accessible to all while creating a sense of community not only within the organization but also within the tennis ecosystem. The core values are so important and should be top of mind in all that we do and in how we conduct ourselves as chairs, vice chairs, ROs, and staff liaisons.

**Mission:** Growing tennis inclusively to promote and inspire healthier people while serving Texas communities.

**Vision:** Leader in innovative solutions to increase tennis participation, accessibility, longevity and opportunity for all Texans.

**Purpose:** To grow tennis within our community by serving, promoting and advocating for accessibility and opportunity to impact the health and lives of all Texans.

**Core Values:** Integrity, Inclusion, Innovation, Accountability, Collaboration, Excellence

Fred explained that USTA is the national governing body for tennis in the United States. USTA Texas is the third largest of the 17 Sections, and it includes all of Texas except El Paso and Texarkana. Lara explained that as a volunteer lead organization, USTA Texas' organizational chart has the Board at the top. Management Committee is made up of the officers of the Board plus the Delegate (typically the immediate past president) and chair of Nominating Committee (typically immediate past Delegate), any person from the Section serving on the USTA national board, plus the General Counsel and ED who are non-voting members of the committee. Management Committee is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization with oversight from the board.

The Board also includes past USTA Texas presidents in good standing as well as six elected Directors at Large who serve a three-year term (one from the North Zone and one from the South Zone are elected each year). The Board also has two Presidential Appointees who serve a two-year term along with the President who appoints them. The At Large Directors are elected by the Members of the Organization while the Board elects the Management Committee members and approves Presidential Appointees as well as the Nominating Committee made up of the chair and two individuals from the North Zone and two from the South Zone.

Management Committee members are assigned the role of Responsible Officer (RO) to a committee and act as a liaison between the committee and Management Committee and Board. The Executive Director oversees the staff, which includes Department Heads, and staff members are assigned a committee to be staff liaisons to. The Committee chair, staff liaison, and RO should be included on all communication that go out to the committee.

### **3. Committee Charges and Code of Conduct**

Committee charges may be found in the Committee Information Packet on the Family Page. They are general descriptions of each committees' responsibility. The chair, staff liaison, RO will work together to come up with committee goals for the upcoming term.

Lara explained that the Code of Conduct spells out what is expected of volunteers. It basically says that as a representative of USTA Texas, volunteers will conduct themselves in ethical and respectful ways and won't benefit financially from service as a volunteer with USTA Texas or use USTA to identify with causes or subjects not appropriate for it to be associated with including partisan politics or religious matters. It also says volunteers can't disclose confidential information and should operate in a manner that is in the best interest of USTA Texas.

For this term we included language about upholding our commitment to inclusion and respect and require volunteers to maintain the highest standards of respect and professionalism in every interaction be it in person, online, through text message, email, or social media.

### **a. Chair and Staff Duties: Leadership Expectation and Decision Making**

The fishbowl learning exercise demonstrated challenges to look out for including talking over others (not listening to them), chair not reaching out to communicate things to vice chair or committee members, lack of respect for others, no common ground, failure to communicate and reach out to committee members before the first meeting.

It is important to understand the communication method committee members prefer or at least set expectations as to which form you will use to communicate with them. Communicate meeting cadence to committee members and manage their expectations. Try to listen more and talk less.

Challenges volunteers and staff may encounter include competing agendas (the organizational chart can help with this), delegating or assigning too much to the wrong party, poor communication, being unprepared, lack of organization, not being aligned with one another (committee charge and Mission, Vision, Purpose statement can help ensure all are rowing in the same direction), time management, not responding to emails, not understanding roles, no clear understanding of the goals. One good idea is to send out a meeting recap after a meeting.

Understanding the history of the organization and committee, what has been done and what we can build on is important. Staff can communicate the tools available to reach committee goals.

### **b. Importance of Volunteer/Staff Collaboration**

Communicate early with committee members, be inclusive, understand roles and responsibilities of chair, vice chair, committee members, staff, RO. Respond in a timely manner, be respectful of others' time.

As a chair, you can communicate with each committee member to gauge their level of commitment and know how much they want to do. Subcommittees can help spread out the work and create better committee member engagement. Establish clear goals and action items. Have meetings as needed but not just to have meetings. Stay engaged and know when it's time to pivot. Volunteers' time has changed since the pandemic. Ask for help if you see an issue arise and address it immediately.

Get input from staff – what would be helpful to get done. Go narrow and deep rather than trying to get five things done. Have a process for how you come up with solutions. Find root causes to the problem. Be purposeful – process and goals and roles should be clear. The Roles and Responsibilities document on the Family Page can help with this.

#### **4. Meeting Candance, Agenda and Minutes**

Taylor Jones went over resources and tools on the new Family Page (familytexas.com takes you right there as it's #1 on google search). This is the best resource for you. After interviewing all of the chairs and asking what they would like to know as a new member, staff came up with the Family Page which has a Chair Resources section on it.

Taylor shared that she would be sending out a preliminary committee roster. This year we are requiring everyone to be Safe Play approved and have current USTA membership before being placed on a committee roster. Also, volunteers will not be able to register for the Annual Meeting if they are not on the committee roster.

There is a template on the Family Page to create your committee agenda. Staff prints agendas for the meetings. The form for committee minutes can also be found on the Family Page. These should be done for all meetings (in person and virtual) to create an official record. A question came up as to whether a chair could upload minutes they had created into the minutes form document.

Susan Hochstatter went over the Expense Report and Reimbursement Policy, both of which are found on the Family Page. Receipts are not needed for per-dem meals, but meals are only reimbursed if no USTA Texas or USTA meal is provided. Air travel (and everything associated with it such as airport parking, taxi/uber, car rental, etc.) is only refunded up to the amount of mileage allowed which is the mileage from your home to the meeting and back to your home (for Section meetings). Kandice Thompson emphasized that volunteers are encouraged to register early for meetings and to reserve a hotel room that is in the hotel block by the deadline. If the hotel block is full, hotel rooms outside of the room block may be reimbursed up to the room blocked hotel rate. Please reach out to Susan for all meeting registration and reimbursement questions.

The signed reimbursement form, along with receipts, are due to Susan two weeks after the meeting. For first time volunteers, you will receive an email from Susan and Jean Warren to set up electronic payment for reimbursement (so checks are no longer mailed out).

For USTA (national) committee members, USTA Texas pays 100% reimbursable expenses for the USTA Annual Meeting. Since USTA hasn't been holding a Semiannual Meeting for committee members, USTA Texas has given some money to reimburse those going up to New York for the US Open. Please include the Reimbursement Form along with receipts in one email to send to Susan. Email is the number one way USTA Texas staff communicates with volunteers.

## **5. Effective Meeting Facilitation Techniques**

Create psychological safety. Assure all that there are no dumb questions, this is a safe space, etc. This process will take time, but with the incredible passion of staff and volunteers, it will be powerful to see how we can grow together.

Top 10 tips for effective meeting facilitation:

1. Clear objectives
2. Agenda
3. Ground rules – set up a culture where you foster respect among the group
4. Ensure participation and engagement
5. Time allocation
6. Empathetic listening – encourage follow up questions
7. Be a neutral facilitator
8. Use technology
9. Utilize next steps
10. Evaluations and assessment

Focus on bringing it out of people. If a disagreement or if going off topic comes up, suggest talking offline and maybe putting the issue on the agenda for next time. You can't change how someone is feeling, but you need to address it so that it doesn't become destructive noise. You can change the agenda at the beginning of the meeting, too.

## **6. Reporting Responsibilities to the Board**

At the Annual and Semiannual Board meetings, the chairs will sit at a table together and give one highlight and one challenge, if applicable. The Board will hopefully have read your committee reports before the meeting and will have the opportunity to ask you any questions they may have about your committee. If the chair is unable to be available at these Board meetings, the vice chair, then the RO may fill in for the chair.

## **7. Communication Tools and Platforms**

Taylor went over communication tools on the Family Page including Google Meet (staff can set up meetings for you). Doodle and LetsMeet may be used as scheduling tools to set up meetings. While email is the primary form of communication from USTA Texas, other communication tools include USTA Texas Committee Facebook Group and WhatsApp for committee chairs. Please be sure to forward on to your committee members any announcements you receive including meeting registration, deadlines, etc.

## **8. Contact information, Support and Resources**

If committee members are not responding to your emails, you may want to call them to make sure they are receiving your emails and to see if they are still wanting to be involved. It may be good to ask your committee members why they want to serve on your committee, which might give you insight into what they are interested in.

## **9. Fostering a Positive Culture – Building an Inclusive, Collaborative, and Supportive Environment**

USTA Texas is making its talent (volunteers and staff) the priority and we are focusing on the six core values: I-I-I-A-C-E (inclusion, integrity, innovation, accountability, collaboration, excellence). Culture is the behavioral interpretation of how we live out our values, which are our beliefs and behaviors of how we treat each other. Symbols, such as the USTA Texas logo, are things that remind people of those cultural elements that bind them together. Someone once said “Culture eats strategy for breakfast” suggesting that your organizational culture executes the strategy and gives you a competitive edge.

You don’t want any of the three G’s on your committee: Get out, Get by, Get even (behavioral noise). Sometimes if you have a diverse team and some feel minimized or ignored or suppressed, the team effectiveness decreases. You need to ensure on a diverse team that all feel included. Feelings lead to the three G’s.

Inclusive leadership drives growth. To differentiate, you need to innovate, and you need diversity of thought and intentional inclusion to do that. Inclusive leadership is aware of its own biases and preferences but actively seeks out and considers different views and perspectives to make better informed decisions. Inclusive leaders have cultural intelligence, curiosity, collaboration, are committed, cognizant (mindful of personal and organizational blind spots), and courageous. Erica Nelson-Flowers added they are also intentional, thoughtful, and have empathy for someone else’s experience. They are genuine and authentic rather than checking the box. Blind spots include confirming beliefs and unconscious bias rather than seeing people for who they are and who they can be.

## **10. Goal Setting Timeline**

Please confer with your staff liaison and RO and look at your committee charge as well as the strategic objectives and goals to come up with and submit your committee's goals for the term by January 13. Everyone will be going to the strategic plan to set their goals and to make sure the committee goals are tied into this. The Vision Statement is *where* the organization wants to be and the Purpose Statement is *why* we are doing what we are doing. Need a clear understanding of the goals and an understanding of the charge. Committee goals should be accountable and measurable. Stay focused and be aware of time management.

## **11. On-going Training Development Opportunities and Quarterly Check-in**

Bill advised that he will be conducting ongoing trainings throughout the year on the six core values so be on the lookout for that.