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INTRODUCTION

A USTA Community Tennis Association (CTA) is “any incorporated, geographically defined, not-for-profit, volunteer based organization that supports or provides comprehensive programs.” As an association, the group works to establish, coordinate and maintain tennis programs and services, guaranteeing that they are open and accessible to all. CTAs may act as advocates, program administrators, promoters or fundraisers. Fueled by local volunteers, they exist to promote and develop the game of tennis in the community. There are approximately 750 registered USTA Community Tennis Associations across the United States. These CTAs develop and promote tennis at the grassroots level, and many of these organizations partner with other community organizations to help grow the game at the local level. For more information on Community Tennis Associations, please visit our [CTA web page](#).

CTAs, like many other community based sports organizations, are “non-profit businesses” with the same challenges and obligations of other businesses including governance, administration, finances, IRS compliance, marketing, etc. This Resource Guide was developed as a tool to guide individuals through the process of forming, managing, and improving a CTA. There is a wealth of information available on the Internet and the sites selected for this guide are for general information purposes only and are not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. Please note that the USTA has no control over the nature, content, accuracy, reliability and availability of sites referenced in this guide and the inclusion of any links does not imply a USTA recommendation or endorsement of the views/information expressed within those sites.



STRUCTURE

Forming a New Community Tennis Association

Forming a new CTA is a huge, but very rewarding, undertaking. It involves ongoing coordinated efforts by a group of dedicated tennis players who want to serve their community. Some CTAs offer only one program, tournament or special event, some run a tennis program at a specific facility, some simply fundraise, some operate similar to Little League and soccer youth groups - handling registration, coaches, etc. to partner with multiple recreation agencies to provide tennis at various facilities. The links contained in this Resource Guide have been selected to give guidance on how to navigate the process of forming, managing, and improving a CTA. This is a fluid document and users are encouraged to contact the USTA with suggestions for additional topics, links, etc., and to notify the USTA if a link has become obsolete. Basic information about CTAs can be found on the [CTA web page](#).

Developing your Bylaws

The first step in forming your CTA is to develop Bylaws, which will serve as your governing document. For an example, please view the [2020 Constitution and Bylaws for the United States Tennis Association](#). In developing Bylaws for your CTA, it is very helpful to look at the Bylaws of other CTAs in your state and section. A very important part of your Bylaws is your mission statement. The mission statement for the USTA is to "promote and develop the growth of tennis." To find contact information for your section, please see the [USTA Section web page](#).

The USTA Constitution and Bylaws define Community Tennis Associations as: "Any multipurpose, incorporated, geographically defined, not-for-profit, volunteer tennis support organization which supports or provides comprehensive programs."

Mission Statement

Your CTA has already defined its mission in your Bylaws. Shortly after forming your CTA, it is recommended that you engage an expert to conduct a strategic planning session with your board. Many USTA state and section offices assist CTAs by facilitating strategic planning sessions. A wealth of information about strategic plans can be found at the [National Council of Nonprofits](#).

Board of Directors and Committees

Establishing a knowledgeable and diverse Board of Directors is vital to the success of a CTA. Your CTA will be responsible for meeting a number of federal, state, and USTA requirements, and your Board members can be of great assistance.

Your Board will most likely include tennis enthusiasts from your community, but you will also want to include individuals who can help achieve your mission that have special skills in addition to their love of tennis. Many Boards include attorneys, accountants and representatives from schools, recreation and parks departments and other non-profit organizations with similar purposes.

Your committee structure will most likely be related to your mission statement. You may start with a few committees, such as governance, youth programs, adult programs and communications. As your programs grow, you will want to create additional committees.

[National Council of Nonprofits](#) is an excellent organization that provides a tremendous amount of information for non-profit organizations. It has valuable information on forming your Board of Directors and Committees.



Articles of Incorporation

CTAs are considered to be corporations under most state laws. Therefore, you must file Articles of Incorporation with the State. Generally, the Secretary of State is responsible for corporate filings. Websites for most Secretary of State Office include sample forms that are very helpful. [E-Secretary of State](#) is a helpful web page where you can find information regarding your state. You can find contact information for your Secretary of State.

Applying for a Federal Tax ID (Employer Identification Number)

You can apply to the IRS online, by fax, or mail. You can find additional information and also submit an online application on the [IRS web page](#).

Register your Organization with the USTA

In order to qualify as a CTA, your organization must meet the requirements set forth in the Bylaws. One of the requirements to become a registered CTA is to have an active USTA Organizational Membership. To purchase or renew your USTA Organizational Membership, please visit the [Organization Membership web page](#).

To complete the application to become a registered CTA, please visit the [CTA Registration website](#). Please note that CTA registration is annual and all organizations will be asked to renew for the next year in November. After submitting your application, it will be reviewed and approved by your state/district and/or section and the USTA national office. For assistance with CTA registration, please email cta@usta.com.

Registered CTA Insurance Programs

One of the benefits of registering your CTA with the USTA is the ability to purchase discounted insurance. The USTA offers two types of insurance, a Master Liability Insurance Program and a Directors and Officers Insurance Program. Information on these programs can be found on the USTA [CTA Insurance web page](#).

Compliance with your State's Charitable Solicitation Registration Requirements

Most states require organizations that solicit charitable contributions to register under their Charitable Solicitations law. The National Association of State Charity Officials (NASCO) has contact information for all states on the [NASCO website](#).

Applying for Tax Exempt Status with the IRS

Although it is not required that CTAs become non-profit organizations approved by the Internal Revenue Service, it is highly recommended. Once your CTA begins to offer more programming, you will most likely want to solicit charitable contributions to help run your programs. Information on how to apply to the IRS to become a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is found on the [IRS web page](#). *It is critical that you seek assistance from a CPA or other individual who is very knowledgeable about this application process.*

Submitting Annual Tax Returns to the IRS

If your CTA is approved for tax-exempt status by the IRS, you are required to file annual returns in the form of a 990N, 990, or 990EZ. Instructions for completing and filing these forms can be found on the [IRS web page](#).



PLANNING & FUNDING

Following the formation of your CTA, planning for success is extremely important. That plan needs to include in-depth discussions with your Board about everything from programming, allocation of resources, volunteers, community partnerships, leadership transition, working with your USTA section, district/state, and funding. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind and topics which need to be addressed annually.

Programming

There is an entire section below on programming so be sure to think about the resources you have available to run these programs. It's important to not overextend yourselves. New CTAs should start small; perhaps only one or two events, and as it grows continue to improve and expand.

Volunteers

Unless your CTA has the financial resources for a paid staff, you will need a stream of volunteers to assist with everything from organizational improvement to operational sustainability to implementing grassroots tennis programs. It is recommended that a portion of every board meeting and/or annual meeting be spent on recruiting volunteers. Identify areas where you need expertise – social media, accounting, legal, advocacy, etc., and make sure you find quality people in each of these areas. And don't forget to include diverse populations and high school and college tennis enthusiasts; they will all be a valuable pipeline for volunteer sustainability.

Community Partners

A lot of people might ask, why does my CTA need community partners? The answer is, to make your life as a CTA a lot easier. Think about what your CTA might need to be accomplished but you don't have the critical mass to get it done – advocacy, funding, local government support, program implementation, and diversity and inclusion, to name a few. See below for a list of possible community partners and how they can help your CTA.

- **Schools:** Board and committee volunteers
- **Park & Recreation departments:** Programming assistance
- **YMCAs:** Programming assistance
- **Boys & Girls Clubs:** Youth programming
- **Chamber of Commerce:** Advocacy
- **Parent Organizations:** Volunteers
- **Healthcare Organizations:** Advocacy, financial assistance, co-marketing opportunities



Leadership Transition

This is a subject CTAs do not like to discuss but nevertheless is necessary – who is going to take over the CTA when the current leadership is ready to move on? It is important to know the expertise and timelines for your key personnel - president, treasurer, secretary, committee chairs and Board members - to plan for their departure. Establishing terms and term limits is a good start but CTAs need to go beyond the basics and create a pathway and education mechanism for transitioning leadership. [The Council of Nonprofits](#) website has suggestions for doing this successfully.

Working With the USTA

In addition to the partners listed above, your CTA should develop a relationship with key personnel within your District/State and Section. Each offers a number of resources available for your CTA's organizational and operational improvement. Check with your local Executive Director or Tennis Service Representative or Section CTA Coordinator for help.

Funding

While it is critically important to include all the elements listed above in your CTAs planning process, it is equally important to have a pipeline of income to support your programming and operational existence. It doesn't take much financial support but here are a few ideas to keep your CTA financially viable.

Program Fees

Most CTAs run programs that have a participation/entry fee which hopefully cumulatively exceeds the cost of running the program. So whether you are hosting a tournament, running a Junior Team Tennis program, initiating an adult social tennis event, or conducting youth tennis lessons, make sure revenues exceed expenses.

Grants

Your district/state, section and/or the USTA national organization may have funds available for a variety of programming, equipment and educational assistance. There are often monies available for grassroots start-up programming, social events, training teachers and pros, tennis equipment, and minority and adaptive specific initiatives.

Corporate Donations

You would be surprised at the number of companies in your community looking for opportunities to donate to worthy causes. And if the cause has anything to do with the health and fitness of community members, that's even better. Look for donations from banks, grocery stores, hospitals and health clinics, insurance companies, and other sports organizations, such as professional sports teams.



Individual Donations

While this may seem obvious, it's one of the more difficult donors to engage. Why? Because most are looking for a reason to donate - a specific cause to support. So if you are going to go the route of soliciting donations from individuals, make sure there is a reason beyond supporting your CTA. Personalize it with people that you will be supporting.

Foundations

Every community has foundations looking for worthy causes to support. Most are supported by wealthy individuals (past or present) looking for a cause to support. Some might be affiliated with a company or association, but in most cases you will need to fill out a "request form" stating the reason you need the funding. These are particularly good sources if you are looking to upgrade or build a tennis facility.

Retail

This may sound strange but many grocery stores and restaurants (especially chains) will allow your CTA to designate specific days for your fundraising venture. You simply speak with the manager, pick a day or two for your fundraiser, promote it, and you often collect a percentage of the sales (from your patrons) that go towards your CTA's bank account. Nice! There is a limitless source of funding for your CTA, it requires a bit of work and creativity but could sustain your organization for decades.

PROGRAMMING

One of the major reasons for forming a Community Tennis Association is to grow the sport of tennis in your community. The USTA offers programs, many times in partnership with public and private clubs, parks and recreation departments, schools, and many other tennis advocates for all levels of tennis players. The USTA wants every one of all ages and abilities to participate in tennis as a fun, lifetime sport.

Tennis is a lifetime sport that can be played and enjoyed by people of any age and of every ability. Whether you're picking up a tennis racquet for the first time or you've played the game for years, you'll find that tennis is a sport whose bounty of benefits is unmatched by any other sport or activity. It's a great way to stay fit, make friends, spend quality time with your family life – and have fun! Tennis is a sport that can add years to your life and life to your years. When you find yourself in the game, you'll find yourself in a happier, healthier place. The [USTA Play webpage](#) provides more information on all of the opportunities listed below.



Youth Tennis

[Net Generation – Official Youth Tennis of the USTA](#)

Net Generation provides American tennis with one unified youth brand for children to get into the sport, making it easier for children and their parents to learn about tennis and get into the game in schools, parks and tennis clubs across the country. Net Generation embraces all aspects of youth play for kids ages 5-18.

The objective of Net Generation is to provide a safe connection to the sport, as well as a platform to celebrate individuality and self-expression. To ensure a safe environment, all Net Generation providers – including coaches, teachers, players and volunteers – must first go through a Safe Play Program, which involves a three-step process, including a background check, by registering on NetGeneration.com. With the USTA's focus on childhood safety, this system was the first of its kind in the sports landscape to require all providers to submit to a comprehensive screening and education program.

[Team Tennis](#)

USTA Junior Team Tennis brings together boys and girls, ages 6 to 18, to play singles, doubles and mixed doubles against other coed teams. Beyond being fun and a great form of exercise, Junior Team Tennis is a competitive, level-based environment that promotes individual growth, social growth and life skills.

[Junior Tournaments](#)

A new, simplified USTA Junior Tournaments structure took effect in January 2021! After extensive research, including feedback from our players, we developed these standardized systems to provide greater consistency and more opportunities for our players, parents, coaches, tournament directors and officials. Here is everything you need to know about this new system.

- This nationwide system provides consistent tournament levels and standardized tournament operations for all events—regardless of location—replacing a system that was greatly dependent upon the region.
- The new system allows players to more easily compete across sections, as the levels are now standardized with an increased number of open events, providing even more playing opportunities for junior players.
- In addition, there are on-ranking events available, such as the USTA Junior Circuit events, which focus on age-appropriate competition, development, and fun.

Adult Tennis

[Social Tennis](#)

If you're looking for an exciting tennis experience that focuses not only on tennis but also having fun with friends and meeting new people, then Adult Social Tennis is for you! The USTA is offering two types of Adult Social Tennis Programs: Social Leagues & Team Up Events.

[USTA Leagues](#)

With more than 300,000 players taking part each year, USTA League is the country's largest adult competitive tennis league. It's a great way to stay active, improve your tennis game, and have the chance to compete for a National Championship. If you love tennis, you'll love USTA League and being part of a team.



[Adult Tennis](#)

USTA-sanctioned tournaments are held throughout the country, which you can enter based on age (open, 30 and over, 35 and over, etc., up to 90 and over) or ability (NTRP rating). Ranking points are awarded at these events and go toward your sectional or district ranking.

Additional Programs

[Wheelchair Tennis](#)

The USTA is dedicated to providing top-flight programming and developmental opportunities to wheelchair athletes of all ages and backgrounds. The goal, above all else, is for the athletes to learn the sport of tennis and have fun.

[Adaptive Tennis](#)

Everyone can play the sport of tennis, with the appropriate equipment. People of any age, environment, condition or ability are invited to enjoy the game. The USTA has everything you need to develop or grow your program, including grants, program curricula, scholarships, coaching opportunities and much more.

[Diversity & Inclusion](#)

The USTA celebrates the open format – the idea that anyone from anywhere should be able to play and compete. That’s the driving force behind our Diversity & Inclusion strategy, designed to grow and promote our sport to the next generation – and future generations – of fans, players and volunteers. USTA is removing barriers and creating opportunities wherever we can so that tennis becomes a true reflection of America.

COMMUNICATIONS

It is important for a Community Tennis Associations to have established channels of communication with periodic messaging. These communication channels should be both internal and external as well as in-person and online. This would include regular CTA Board and/or management meetings, documentation of those meetings, and communication to providers, participants and community partners.

Communication with board members, staff, and volunteers are examples of internal communication while communication with participants, community partners, and the general public are examples of external communication.

Examples of CTA Communication Methods

- CTA Newsletter (email or direct mail)
- Email Programs
- Other Sporting Events
- Parent/Teacher Associations
- Posted Notices (banners, yard signs, etc.)
- Radio/TV
- Social Media
- Text Blasts
- Third Party Newsletter
- Trade Shows
- Webinar
- Website



[Serve Tennis](#)

The USTA is here for you with Serve Tennis, a flexible digital tool designed specifically for tennis that helps you manage your organization or individual tennis business. Plus, customer care and training that's there for you every step of the way.

Serve Tennis includes digital tools provided by the USTA that allows you to automate your administrative and management processes simply by allowing you to register players, administer online payments, communicate with customers, ultimately making delivering tennis easier.

Social Media Tools & Platforms

- **Blogs:** A platform for casual dialogue and discussions on a specific topic or opinion.
- **Facebook:** Many organizations use Facebook to post content about their mission, share videos, and promote events. Users who "like" organizations' pages see this content in their News Feed and have the opportunity to interact with the post (like, comment, share). When an organization creates an event, users can indicate that they are "going" or "interested", invite their friends to attend, and participate in conversations about the event. Facebook also includes features made specifically for nonprofits including donating buttons, pledge match donations, fundraising tools for supporters, and donation reporting features. This platform is great for raising awareness about upcoming events.
- **Twitter:** A social networking platform where users can share short posts called tweets (280-character limit). Organizations can use Twitter to share timely news, quick updates, videos and photos, and create buzz about the organization. This platform is great for engaging with supporters.
- **Instagram:** This highly visual platform is for sharing photos and videos that appear in followers' feed. Users then have the opportunity to "like" or comment on the post. Posts typically include eye-catching photos, short captions, and #hashtags related to the image, campaign, or organization. This platform is great for sharing short clips or action shots.
- **YouTube & Vimeo:** These are video hosting and watching websites where users can upload videos and curate them into playlists. This platform is great for sharing longer videos of lessons, demonstrations, or interviews. Videos posted here can also be shared on other social media sites.

Social Media Tools & Platforms (Cont.)

- **LinkedIn:** A social media platform designed primarily for professionals. LinkedIn can be used to connect with industry professionals, garner corporate funding, and reach potential volunteers/employees. By sharing content such as articles about your organization, statistics highlighting your impact in the community, and success stories, you can position your organization as an industry expert and/or trustworthy partner. This platform is great for building credibility in the community.
- **Survey Monkey & Google Forms:** While not a social media channel, these are great tools for aggregating feedback and insights. Both are free, simple to use, and can be integrated into both email and social media, increasing the odds of getting larger sample sizes. These tools are great for gathering information.



SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATION RESOURCE GUIDE

- **Hootsuite:** This tool is for managing multiple social media accounts including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube from one dashboard. With Hootsuite, you can schedule and publish posts then measure their effectiveness and reach using data analytics. This is a great tool for managing multiple accounts.
- **Canva:** A tool for creating graphics and marketing materials. Canva offers many free templates, fonts, photos, and graphics that can be customized and shared on various social media platforms. Canva even offers its premium version free to registered nonprofits. This is a great tool for creating eye-catching graphics.

Tips

- Consider using your social media platforms to hold a contest or giveaway. This is an excellent way to keep your audience engaged and potentially reach new followers. For example, to enter the contest, users could be asked to like a page, tweet, or photo, follow a social media account, or share their own photo using your organization's hashtag. The winner of the contest could then receive branded giveaways (t-shirt, water bottle, etc.), tickets to an event, or a unique opportunity. This is a great way to gather new followers.
- Try using your social media platforms to feature exceptional volunteers and/or staff members. Also consider using these platforms to recognize and thank supporters and/or donors. This is a great way to acknowledge the hard work of your supporters.

Advocacy

Advocacy for tennis involves taking our knowledge and passion for tennis and connecting it to the needs of communities, schools, colleges and local governments. Advocacy is the ability to demonstrate to decision-makers how tennis programs can benefit the community.

The USTA has developed an extensive Advocacy Handbook that can help you succeed in engaging with public- and private-sector decision-makers in support of tennis at the local level. This engagement will help to harness the public support and resources needed to expand the availability and quality of tennis facilities and programming like yours.

The sport of tennis can be an important part of improving communities, schools, the health of individuals and the quality of life for all. As members of the tennis family, we know how this sport can make a difference in people's lives. As advocates for tennis, our mission is to convince decision-makers in the public, private and non-profit sectors of this to gain their support.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Facility Services

How can the USTA help make your tennis facility dream come true? The USTA Facility Services program offers you and your community assistance with technical and financial resources. The USTA offers many Facility Services including business development and technical expertise for all types of facilities and financial assistance to facilities that meet certain criteria.

In addition, customers are appointed project consultants from the USTA National staff, who deliver personalized support and service to help take your project from dream to reality. The Facility Services process starts with a representative from your organization completing the [USTA Facility Services](#) form and then a USTA national project consultant will reach out to learn more about your project and help answer any other questions you may have.



[National Junior Tennis & Learning \(NJTL\)](#)

In 1969, the National Junior Tennis League was created as a way to gain and hold the attention of young people, with the hope of teaching them the importance of character, getting an education and becoming productive citizens.

Today, the now-named National Junior Tennis and Learning network features more than 250 nonprofit youth development organizations that offer free or low-cost tennis and education programming to over 160,000 under-resourced youth each year.

NJTL is supported by the USTA Foundation, the national charitable organization of the USTA. The work done by its member chapters includes after-school tutoring that focuses on academic enrichment, a life-skills curriculum and, of course, tennis.

[Tennis Industry United](#)

The tennis industry has come together during the COVID-19 pandemic to analyze the needs and concerns of all involved in our sport, collaborating on programs that can provide both immediate and longer-term support. We have assembled a list of resources focused on financial assistance and relief, in order to make accessing the potential help available easier and quicker. We will continue to provide you with more information and resources throughout this crisis as they are developed.

[USTA Sections](#)

The USTA is made up of 17 individual sections, each representing distinct geographic locations throughout the U.S. and all working to support players and promote the growth of the game across the country. In turn, the 17 sections are each comprised of individual districts.

[Webinars](#)

The USTA offers an excellent series of webinars for CTAs and tennis advocates throughout the year. Topics vary and are designed to help you grow the game and strengthen your CTA's tennis programming.