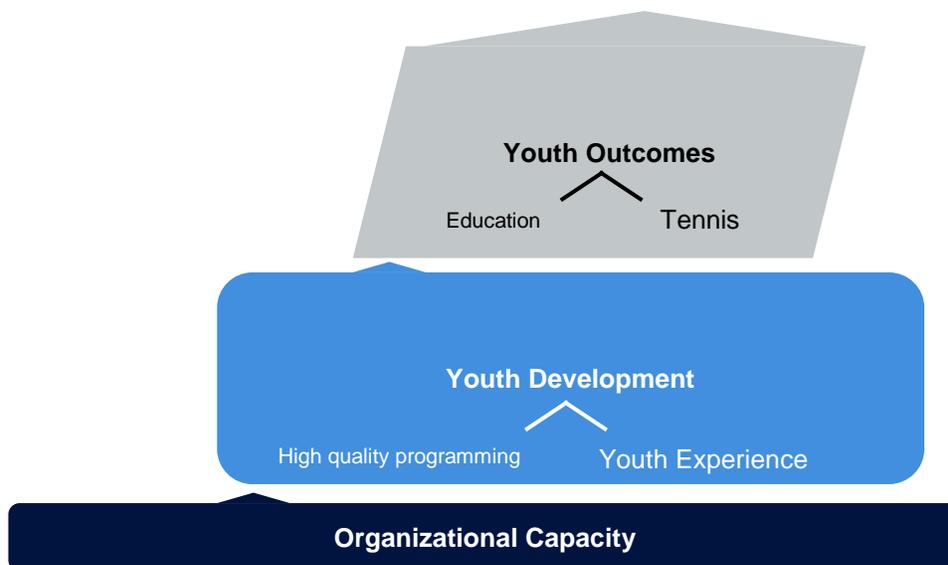


USTAF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Theory of Action

Our working theory of action for NJTL programs is that organizational capacity supports strong youth development practices that lead to youth outcomes in both education and tennis.



The mission of the USTA Foundation is to bring tennis and education together to change lives.

Key Supports for Youth Development

How are we defining strong youth development practices? We are taking a closer look at program quality and youth experiences of program.

Program Quality

Safe environment

- **Physical and psychological safety:** A space for play that is free of health and safety hazards, clean, and has easily accessible drinking water; the emotional climate of the program is supportive, relaxed, mutually respectful and characterized by camaraderie and inclusiveness.
- **Appropriate structure:** Developmentally appropriate flow and pace of sessions where youth have an appropriate amount of time to practice and learn skills without becoming bored or disengaged; there are clear rules and expectations that are explicitly communicated and enforced for all players.
- **Opportunities for skill building:** Provides youth the opportunity to build both sports-related skills and life skills; adults provide encouragement to youth to keep improving their skills.

Supportive environment

- **Supportive relationships:** There are caring adults that establish trusted connections with youth; winning is deemphasized; coaches communicate high expectations for behavior and skill mastery.
- **Support for efficacy and mattering:** Coaches emphasize a youth's improvements in their athletic abilities, rather than focusing on a youth's abilities compared to their peers; the program provides young people the opportunity to be useful and to make a difference in their social worlds (helping each other during a sporting event, engaging in community services activities beyond the sporting event). Youth engagement is most meaningful when the benefits extend beyond the individual and link the individual to the surrounding community.

Community building

- **Opportunities to belong:** There are activities and events that foster friendships; peer relationships are inclusive and there aren't cliques; youth strongly identify with the program and their peers in it.
- **Positive social norms:** The sport's program culture involves norms that support good sportsmanship, reduce social alienation, and allow for the acquisition of improved social skills.
- **Integration of family, school, and community efforts:** Programs coordinate its efforts and communicates regularly with the youth's family, school and community to create opportunities for meaningful communication between different settings in youths' lives; program offers a variety of activities and events that involve parents (social events, parental workshops, volunteer opportunities).

Youth Feedback on Their Experiences

Asking youth participants for feedback on their opinions and experiences in NJTL will measure point-of-service quality, or the direct experience of the young people in the program, including the nature and quality of the interactions between youth and staff, between youth and their environment, and among youth themselves.

Measuring NJTL Participant Outcomes

Common youth development literature tells us that youth development programs can lead to many youth outcomes. We have honed in on several specific youth outcomes that are valuable and can be expected of all NJTL programs, regardless of program context or variation. These outcomes include: physical activity, academic motivation, goal setting, competence, integrity, and confidence.

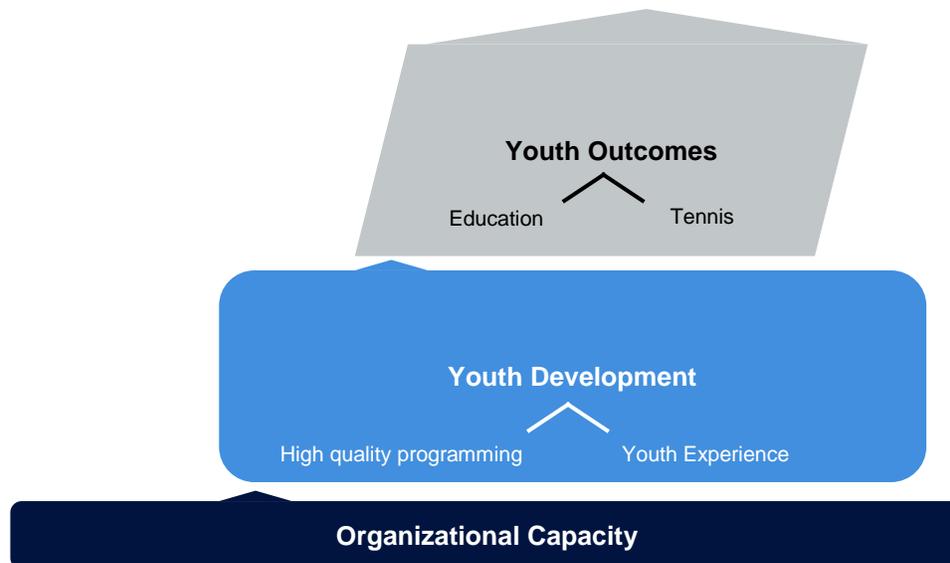
Aligning Our Tools

Moving forward, our data collection and evaluation tools will be aligned with this framework. We will measure these components of program quality and direct outcomes to test our theory of action. This work will then guide our efforts toward continuous quality improvement.

USTAF ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY FRAMEWORK

Theory of Action

Our working theory of action for NJTL programs is that **organizational capacity** supports strong youth development practices that lead to youth outcomes in both education and tennis.



The mission of the USTA Foundation is to bring tennis and education together to change lives.

Key Supports for Organizational Capacity

In general, organizational capacity is “an abstract term that describes a wide range of capabilities, knowledge, and resources that nonprofits need in order to be effective.”¹ When an organization strengthens its capacity, the organization can deliver stronger programs, engage in strategic thinking, carve out a pathway for organizational growth, and be an active partner in collaborative efforts.

Research has demonstrated that there is no one right way to build the capacity for an organization, especially because leadership and organizational context vary widely. An organization’s capacity needs can also differ depending on many factors, such as size, development stage, program model, and even the capacity of other similar organizations in the same community. Yet, there is general agreement that organizations need to develop a solid foundation in order to have the ability to implement strong programs. Some common capacities include: leadership; mission, vision, and strategy; program delivery, fundraising and development, financial management, communications, technology, and strategic relationships.

¹ Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (2014, March 6). *What is nonprofit capacity and why does it matter?* Retrieved from <https://www.geofunders.org/resources/what-is-nonprofit-capacity-and-why-does-it-matter-675>

Nonprofit organizations also need adaptive capacity, which is the “ability to assess, monitor, and respond to and create internal and external changes.”²

Moreover, funders are increasingly recognizing that capacity building is a key way to support strong organizations and their ability to successfully face dynamic and multi-faceted challenges. Instead of allocating funds strictly to program operations, many funders are beginning to provide capacity building grants to help grantees strengthen their organizations from within.

Measuring NJTL Chapter Organizational Capacity

Although the NJTL Chapters vary widely in program design and context, they share a fundamental framework outlined in the Youth Development framework: provide high-quality tennis and education programs rooted in positive youth development practices. Building from this understanding of the importance of organizational capacity, the shared youth development framework, and the existing USTAF capacity building work developed by and for those who actively run NJTLs, we are able to identify the following organizational capacity domains that are of highest value and interest to USTAF:

- **Aspirations & Strategy:** The organization has clear mission and vision for its impact and role in society, as well as a strategy to implement that vision.
- **Partnerships & External Relationships:** The organization develops strategic alliances and intentionally collaborates with partners to move the work forward.
- **Governance/Board of Directors:** There are clear rules around how the organization operates, including board recruitment, operations, and responsibilities.
- **Fundraising & Development:** Cultivating relationships with donors, engaging Board/C-Suite leadership in fundraising, and generating diversified funding streams.
- **Financial Health:** The organization has processes around budgeting, accounting, and managing finances, including compliance, reporting and taxes; monitoring revenue and reserves.
- **Facilities, Infrastructure & Operations:** The organization has physical property in which operations take place, access to supplies and materials, maintenance and technology, as well as systems and structures in place to ensure effectiveness.
- **Learning & Evaluation:** The organization gathers and uses data, engages in continuous quality improvement, and reports on key performance metrics for program and staff, provides framework for accountability and assessing impact.
- **Leadership & Staffing:** The organization’s leadership has the knowledge and ability to build strong working relationships with the board, create quality work conditions and policies, and relationships with staff members.
- **Marketing & Communications:** Mechanisms for communicating, gathering, and giving stakeholder and external feedback and report outs.

² TCC Group (2009). *The sustainability formula: How nonprofit organizations can thrive in the emerging economy*. Retrieved from <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/31526/31526.pdf>

Aligning Our Tools

Moving forward, our data collection and evaluation tools will be aligned with these organizational capacity domains. These may include the enrollment questionnaire, conducting an organizational self-assessment, capacity building event feedback forms, observations, and interviews. Key considerations regarding measuring organizational capacity include the reality that many organizational assessment tools exist but are often adapted or custom-tailored to an organization. We also recognize that the process of using any tool to measure organizational capacity is more important than any one tool itself. This work will then guide our efforts toward continuous quality improvement and help to determine USTAF's strategy for both Star Level ratings and Capacity Building efforts.