



2019 NLARA Annual Report

Introduction

The North Lawndale Athletic and Recreation Association (NLARA) emerged from the shared vision of the North Lawndale community and the NLARA's founding members – UCAN, the North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council, Old St. Patrick's Church and Play Like a Champion Today -- to create a safe and nurturing sports and recreation environment for all the youth in the community. The NLARA works closely with the community and its participating members to build a sustainable youth sports culture that fosters character development through informed and compassionate coaches, parents and adult mentors. By partnering together and working under one culture toward one purpose, member organizations are **stronger together**. Program leaders gain benefits in planning, recruiting, marketing, facilities, data collection, volunteer support, technical assistance and fundraising.

Over the past 3 years, the NLARA, working in kinship with the community, has established its vision and mission, conducted needs assessments, created its strategic plan, increased its programming and is in a continuing process of building its organization. The NLARA is passionate in its response to the ever-present gun violence in its community and believes that engaging with its youth at an early age can combat the negative influences in the community and support them on the road to a healthy and fulfilling life.

In its first year of programming as reported in September 2018, the NLARA served over 500 youth and demonstrated the benefits of working together under a collaborative framework to deliver a supportive sports culture to the community. The NLARA has now completed its second year of programming, building on last year's success, by serving over 700 participants, increasing the depth and diversity of programming and involving 10 organizations that conducted 14 programs. All NLARA programming is made affordable to participants so that all the youth in the community have an opportunity to participate regardless of economic means.

Assets and Needs Assessment

This is the third year that Prof. Clark Power and his University of Notre Dame colleagues conducted assessments of North Lawndale's youth sports and recreational programs. A summary of findings over the past three years is as follows:

- The coaches and community leaders have strong coaching/mentoring backgrounds and are passionately focused on the character development of the youth they serve
- Gang-related violence and crime is an ongoing concern, which youth sports leaders believe can be effectively addressed by increasing the number of after-school and summer sports programs.
- These leaders serve the children of North Lawndale with little fanfare and even less financial support (they typically pay out of their pockets to support their programs)
- Since the establishment of the NLARA, collaboration has steadily increased
- There are not enough teams and programs to accommodate the children who would like to participate.
- There are few programs available to girls and very few women are coaching.
- Very few programs exist for elementary school children (boys and girls) below the 7th grade; but the NLARA made progress in this over the past summer.

In summary, the first Assets and Needs Assessment led to the establishment of the NLARA, and the two following assessments continue to inform the NLARA's vision, mission, and strategy.

Summer Programming Summary:

2019 NLARA Summer Programming

	UCAN Open Gym	North Lawndale Eagles	The Bloc	Endless Energy Clinics	Endless Energy: Trust the Process	The Investment	DRW Skills Camp	Boxing Out Negativity (BON)	BON Community Events	Urban Initiatives*	Four Point Play*	Darren Group DG Peace League & Fundamentals Clinic**
Participants	63	55	23	74	64	46	14	22	143	31	59	114
June 2019	50 Hours	120 Hours	200 Hours			180 Hours		200 Hours				35 Hours
July 2019				5 Hours					5 Hours			
August 2019				5 Hours	20 Hours		54 Hours		5 Hours	40 Hours		
									5 Hours		8 Hours	

*New participant; **Program discontinued (see below)

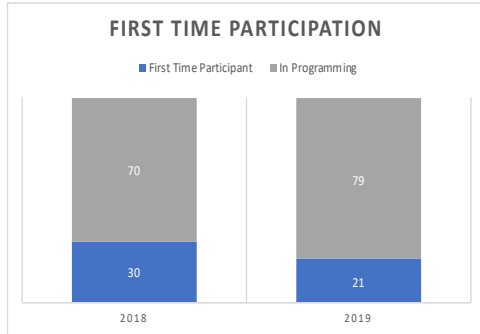
2019 Programming

- ✓ **North Lawndale Eagles Football:** Included daily practices through the summer and games in the fall. The Eagles, led by Coach Charles Rice, have had a notable community presence for over 30 years, providing programming for boys ages 6-14.
- ✓ **The Bloc** uses the discipline of boxing to provide mentorship, academic support for Chicago's youth. This summer, The Bloc introduced a program for high school-aged youth.
- ✓ **The Investment**, a ministry of Lawndale Community Church, runs year-round basketball programming and conducted practices and games throughout the summer.
- ✓ **Boxing Out Negativity** organized three community events throughout the summer and held daily boxing practice that included distance running, cycling and competitions
- ✓ **Endless Energy** hosted a shooting clinic and collaborated with Old St. Pats volunteers to run a 4-week basketball camp in August called Trust the Process. Both events focused on skill and character development.
- ✓ **Urban Initiatives*** organized a multi-sport camp for children in grades K-4 and invited outside organizations to run introductory clinics for sports like Ultimate Frisbee
- ✓ **DRW Prep** hosted a basketball camp for high school-aged women and men. The camp included discussions on physical health, nutrition and the importance of educational achievement.
- ✓ **Four Point Play*** presented a skills development camp for girls and boys over Labor Day.

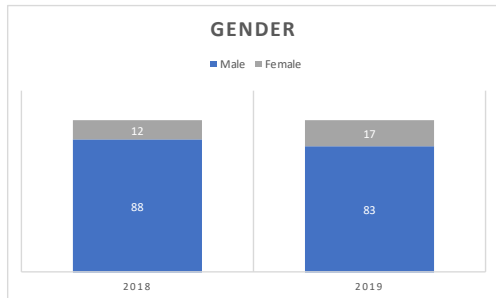
*New program members

Program Outcomes

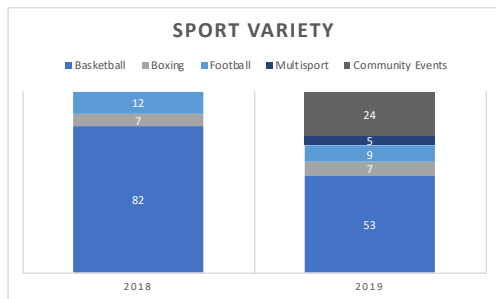
The NLARA, strives to reach an increasing number of participants and targets underserved demographics including girls, grades K-5, and first-time participants. In addition, the NLARA seeks to include a wider range of sports experiences.



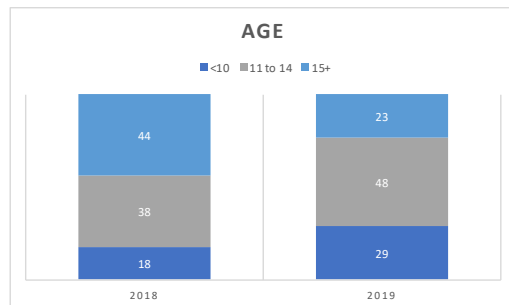
Participation: There were **708** participants across all the programs (32% increase from last year). Survey results indicated that 21% of the participants had not engaged in a sports program during the previous year.



Gender: Most programs continue to serve predominantly male participants but there was improvement in gender diversity due to targeted recruiting by DRW Prep, Urban Initiatives, Endless Energy and Four Point Play.



Sport Variety: In 2018, summer programming was offered in only three sports with 82% of the participants involved in basketball. In 2019, by introducing new programming to the community, the concentration in basketball declined by 29%. The community events were the largest contributor to the decrease, but excluding community events, the basketball concentration still declined.



Age Distribution: The NLARA targeted younger participants this year, resulting in a substantial improvement over the prior year in both the 10 and under and 11 - 14 age groups. The NLARA recognizes that engaging children when they are young will lead to higher retention rates as they grow older.

BMI Data: Weight can be a significant factor impacting a child's physical health. This year, the registration gathered included height/weight data. For those replying to the question, **47%** of the participants were at an unhealthy weight (underweight, overweight, obese). The NLARA plans to build out trend data in in this area over time.

Athlete Surveys: 190 or 42% of participating athletes completed the survey. While the survey collection rate is reasonably high, the percentage of surveys collected declined from last year (60% rate) and more work needs to be done in this area (see Operational Discussion below).

Survey items asked whether the student athletes had fun, liked their coach, were taught to respect their teammates, showed kindness, practiced sportsmanship and were encouraged to be good students. These items reflect the NLARA commitment to developing a sport culture that is fun for all participants, builds relationships, teaches moral values and encourages effort in the classroom. Similar to last year, the results were consistently strong: on a scale of 1 - 5, the mean ratings for each item across the programs ranged from 4.25 (no coaches yelled at me) to 4.76 (like coach/leader).

Expanding Horizons: The NLARA seeks to expand participants' experience beyond the North Lawndale community. Program leaders, as they did last year, continued that focus.

- **The Investment** took their athletes to 2 out of town, weekend basketball tournaments.
- **The Bloc** explored Chicago by going to various museums and training at different gyms. In Mid-October, members traveled to Ohio to watch a fellow fighter compete for a spot on the U.S. team.
Boxing Out Negativity took their athletes on weekly 5K runs through various Chicago parks and participated in monthly bike rides around the Chicagoland area.

Showcasing the Talents of Youth Sports Leaders and Participants in North Lawndale: The depiction of North Lawndale in the press this summer continued to highlight gun violence, which contributed to a lingering negative image of the community. The NLARA strives to change that narrative and shine a light on the gifts of the community and we are succeeding:

- **The North Lawndale Eagles** football program celebrated its 30th anniversary, which was filmed by the NFL.
- **Jamyle Cannon**, founder of the Bloc, was recognized as a **CNN Hero**
- **Boxing Out Negativity** members participated in a boxing exhibition and discussion in Milwaukee.
- Eight NLARA program leaders presented at the **Homeboy Industries** annual conference in Los Angeles in August.
- Fourteen NLARA leaders attended **Play Like a Champion's** conference at the University of Notre Dame and two NLARA organizations received community service awards.
- In partnership with **Old St. Patricks' Church**, a team of 6, including 2 NLARA program leaders, ran the Chicago Marathon, and raised over **\$5k in contributions for the NLARA.**

NLARA Organizational Development

The NLARA, now in its third year, continues to grow its operating and outreach capacity as highlighted by the following:

Coach/Administrator Training: The NLARA partners with **Play Like a Champion**, to provide workshops for its coaches and program leaders. Two sessions were completed over the past year and youth sports program leaders from the community facilitated the workshops. Highlights from the sessions are as follows:

- 31 coaches from 9 different organizations were trained
- The facilitators and attendees were among the best and the brightest among coach-mentors that Play Like a Champion has experienced in its 15 years of operation.
- The participants all shared the NLARA values, committed to putting children's welfare and personal development above winning.

The NLARA also partners with Dr. Wendy Borlabi, NBA Sports Psychologist and founder of **Wisdom Knot**, to conduct youth sports programming and panel sessions for coaches/administrators. In October, Dr. Borlabi conducted the first of three panel discussions for youth sports coaches and leaders. Thirty- one attendees engaged in a lively panel discussion titled "The Sports Halo Effect: The Impact of Sports on Youth Athletes and Their Families."

Registration and Data Collection: The NLARA is committed to developing consistency in its operating processes to support its members and facilitate program delivery and program evaluation. Great strides have been made in the following areas:

- **Participant Registration Forms:** The NLARA developed a standard registration form and succeeded with a 49% completion rate, a significant accomplishment in its first year. Various forms will need to be developed for different event types.
- **Survey Completion:** As noted above, the survey completion percentage declined year over year but still is at a reasonably high rate of 65%. Some programs had a significant drop off in attendance in their last session. We are exploring various options.

The trend data in this report consists primarily of NLARA-sponsored programming activity. Focusing on summer programming has allowed us to develop a data culture among members and demonstrate how we are more effectively communicating our results with trend data. The NLARA is building its metrics capabilities to apply to programming year-round, piloting with three member organizations.

Recruitment: Participants: The NLARA continues to refine its recruiting efforts and is learning from its members as to how to maximize its efforts for attracting underrepresented populations. For the second consecutive year, the NLARA was constrained by the late dispersal of funding for summer programming. The NLARA is placing more focus on recruiting as follows:

- Strive to finalize recruiting strategies no later than February 1st
- Develop a centralized recruiting strategy that focuses on all NLARA programs.
- Engage all members in process of recruiting for each other.
- Shift the focus from recruiting for “an event” to recruiting for year-round programming as well.

Recruitment: New NLARA Members: The NLARA continues to add new member organizations and prospects are hopeful for next year. Developing relationships include Lawndale Community Academy, The Chicago Lions, USA Ultimate Frisbee Association, Girls in the Game, Sport for Good, Sport for a Stronger Chicago and the Chicago Blackhawks community programs.

Program Management: Claude Robinson, UCAN’s Executive Vice President of Diversity and External Affairs, plays the Executive Director role of the NLARA, and is the face of the NLARA to the North Lawndale community, managing the NLARA organization and coordinating community outreach, planning and program development.

Operations Management: Play Like a Champion project manages the organizational development process for the NLARA and provides operating support by implementing the data and evaluation process and building out operating processes.

Marketing/Communications: The NLARA is rolling out its brand in centralized communications as well as establishing the operating processes for its members to further its brand in their marketing efforts (websites, written communications, signage, premiums and clothing). A continued focus will be on supporting members to speak with one voice relative to promoting the NLARA. UCAN Vice President of Marketing Communications Derrick K. Baker is leading that effort.

Fundraising:

UCAN’s Vice President of Development Fred Long is coordinating the NLARA’s fundraising efforts.

Volunteer Engagement: The NLARA continues to build its volunteer base, led primarily by the work of Old St. Patrick’s Church which has partnered with Endless Energy Sports the past two summers running the Trust the Process basketball camp. In 2019 there were 28 volunteers from Old St. Pat’s, an increase of 11 from the prior year. Endless Energy and six volunteers conducted the basketball clinic while other volunteers prepared and served food and participated in small group conversations with the youth participants.

NLARA Next Steps

In 3 years, the NLARA has grown from an idea of passionate community leaders who had a shared vision to a visible force in the community. The NLARA culture is well established, its membership is building, and its presence is being increasingly felt in the community. The NLARA has relied heavily on its founding members to support program and operations management. The NLARA is now seeking funding so it can staff its organization under the direction of its founding members. Like any organization, the NLARA needs to hire talented leadership along with strong administrative support to continue the momentum of the past 2 years.

Finally, The NLARA will continue to embrace its shared vision with its partners and the community centered around its core values: serve the children of North Lawndale by providing sustainable, supportive and safe youth sports opportunities to promote their character development -- and have fun in the process. The NLARA exists because we love our kids and want to provide them with positive alternatives to coach/mentor them along in life.