2027 PRAIRIE LEAGUE AT A GLANCE

SDYSA's mission is to create a soccer environment where every player, club, and community has meaningful opportunities to play, develop, and compete.

The next step in developing this environment is through a league structure that is accessible, appropriate, sustainable, and responsive to the realities of South Dakota.

Who: SDYSA Member Clubs & approved partners
Games: League schedule format vs. tournament
Team Fee: $700 - $900

Format: Club to Club/Event
Locations: Approved local facilities
Age Groups: U9-U14

WHY PRAIRIE LEAGUE?

Keep More Soccer in South Dakota
1

Create meaningful competition within our own state whenever possible.

Create Consistency
2

Shared goals through league structure, established deadlines and predictable scheduling.

Reduce Unnecessary Travel
3

Build competition geographically & intentionally while recognizing that some travel will always be part of competitive soccer in our region.

Strengthen Competition
4

Bring local teams together and create more opportunities for appropriate competitive matchups.

Build for the Future
5

Establish a sustainable statewide league that can grow and improve season after season.

Role of SDYSA

- League Administration
- Scheduling Framework
- Rules & Policies
- Team Placement
- Registration & Management
- Competition Structure
- Standings
- League Communication

Role of Member Clubs

- League Participation
- Team Commitments
- Timely Registration
- Fields/Hosting when applicable
- Coach & Manager Communication
- Schedule Cooperation

How the season works:

Register	Divisions Set	Schedule Released	Play	Results & Standings
Registration opens January 2027	Registration deadline February 2027	Scheduling & League Prep Feb & March 2027	Prairie League Season Begins April/May 2027	

"Our teams already go to tournaments. Why do we need a league?"

Tournaments and league play serve different purposes—and there is room for both.

Tournaments are great opportunities for concentrated competition, travel experiences and playing teams you may not normally see. Prairie League isn't designed to replace them. League play provides something different: a consistent season, scheduled games, standings and meaningful competition over time. Instead of relying on tournaments to build an entire season, teams can use Prairie League as their competitive foundation and choose tournaments that actually add value to their season.

Think of Prairie League as the foundation of the schedule—not the entire schedule.

"We're just going to play the same South Dakota teams we already play."

Especially during the first season, some matchups will be familiar.

But those teams are already playing each other- in friendlies, tournaments and independently scheduled games. Prairie League gives those games structure and purpose. More importantly, the solution to limited competition isn't to avoid building a league because participation is currently small. The solution is to grow participation. **As more clubs and teams participate, SDYSA can create better divisions, more appropriate competitive groupings and eventually more scheduling options.**

"Our families already expect tournaments."

Team can still attend tournaments. Prairie League isn't asking clubs to choose between league OR tournaments. We're asking clubs to consider:

League + intentionally selected tournaments

Instead of attending a tournament because a team needs games, clubs can choose tournaments because the competition, location or experience makes sense for that particular team.

"Why would we stay in South Dakota when we can travel to bigger events?"

Sometimes traveling is absolutely worthwhile, Prairie League isn't built around the idea that teams should never leave South Dakota. Travel means fuel, hotels, meals, staff time and an entire weekend commitment for families which can create barriers to participation.
If appropriate, fun, and meaningful competition can happen closer to home, families can save both money and time-and clubs can reserve longer trips for opportunities where the travel provides real value.

"We want our teams to play different competition."

We do too. Prairie League doesn't prevent teams from attending tournaments or scheduling additional games outside South Dakota. A team might play its Prairie League schedule and still attend two or three tournaments during the season. The difference is that clubs won't have to rely exclusively on traveling hundreds of miles to find every meaningful game. Play your league games at home. Travel when the experience or competition makes the trip worthwhile.

"Isn't tournament play more competitive?"

Sometimes. But simply traveling farther doesn't automatically create better competition.

One of the advantages of a league is the ability to build divisions based on competitive level and adjust those divisions as participation grows. A tournament gives a team several games during one weekend. League play allows performance to be evaluated across an entire season. Over time, results give SDYSA better information to place teams with appropriate opponents. **The more teams that participate, the better we can match competition.**

"South Dakota is too spread out for a statewide league."

Geography is a real hurdle for SD and Prairie League is working to acknowledge it, but South Dakota isn't unique. Neighboring Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota all operate state or state-sanctioned league structures while dealing with their own geography and travel challenges.

Different states solve geography differently: regional divisions, centralized play dates, flexible scheduling, league weekends and club-scheduled games. **Prairie League is being designed around the realities of South Dakota, rather than trying to copy a league designed for a densely populated state.**

"What happens if there aren't enough teams in our age group?"

Where there are enough teams, SDYSA can create appropriate divisions. Where numbers are smaller, we may need to use creative scheduling, combined competition levels or other solutions.

What we don't want to do is decide a league can't work because participation isn't large enough before clubs have actually had the opportunity to participate. Participation creates options. The stronger the commitment from our clubs, the stronger the league becomes.

"Why should our club be one of the first to participate?"

The clubs committed will help establish something South Dakota soccer has been missing.

Our neighboring states already use state-level league structures. Nebraska's league alone reports approximately 1,500 teams participating annually. Iowa offers flexible State League scheduling. Montana operates statewide competition from 10U–19U. South Dakota teams deserve a sustainable competitive structure too.

The clubs that participate in the Prairie League season aren't simply registering for another event, they're helping re-build the competitive soccer infrastructure South Dakota as we navigate the changes to the overall player pathway and experience.

"What if the competition isn't balanced?"

Competitive balance will be one of the league's priorities, but no league gets every matchup perfect.

Initial placement will use the best information available to SDYSA. Results from the inaugural season will then give us much better information for future placement. Over time, the league can become increasingly accurate at matching teams with appropriate competition. This is one of the biggest long-term benefits of having an organized league structure rather than rebuilding schedules from scratch every season.

League Timeline: Now to Spring 2027

Timing	Step	Purpose
Oct 2026	SDYSA prepares launch materials	Final rules, pricing, calendar, FAQs, presentation and club commitment information
Early Nov.	In-Person Prairie League Club Meeting	Present league, establish the why, answer questions, identify participation barriers and make the ask
Within 1 week	Meeting recap + materials	Send presentation, FAQ, rules, deadlines and club/team interest form
Mid-November	Club Intent Deadline	Clubs provide estimated number of teams by age/gender
Late November	Individual club follow-up	SDYSA contacts clubs that have concerns or have not committed
December	Preliminary league projection	SDYSA evaluates anticipated teams/divisions/geographic distribution
Early January 2027	Prairie League Club Update Meeting	Show anticipated participation, answer remaining operational questions and prepare for registration
January	Registration opens	Teams formally register
February	Registration closes	Final team counts established
February	Division/competition review	Build divisions and determine appropriate competitive groupings
Late Feb./March	Scheduling	Complete league schedule and individually scheduled game requirements
March	Team Manager/Coach Meeting	Operational training: schedules, rosters, referees, weather, scores, rescheduling, conduct, contacts
April/May	Prairie League begins	Inaugural Spring 2027 season
End of Spring	Review + club survey	Make targeted improvements before Fall 2027