In an unprecedented partnership, the largest community development nonprofit in the U.S. (LISC), a philanthropic sports organization (Lionsraw), America’s largest soccer fan base (American Outlaws), and a global powerhouse in the field of children’s health (UNICEF), will collaborate to leverage the 2026 FIFA World Cup to increase youth access to sport, build critical skills gained through sport, and stabilize under-resourced communities.

OVERVIEW

In conjunction with the FIFA 2026 World Cup hosted by the USA, Canada and Mexico (UNITED bid), 26x26 will use the World Cup as an opportunity to engage over 100,000 youth in disinvested neighborhoods across the U.S. and transform communities through sport. Using a collective community impact model, 26x26 will build sports infrastructure and the capacity of organizations to help youth ages 9-16 in high-need areas develop critical skills and build community in the process.

Led by LISC and Lionsraw, 26x26 will work with residents and partners to build or renovate 26 soccer fields in neighborhoods where safe, activated play space is scarce; ensure access to sustainable, ongoing soccer and team sport programming; engage American Outlaws’ corps of 28,000 fans as an organized community service volunteer group; and incorporate 2026 World Cup events in host cities that include youth leadership, soccer training, UNICEF’s Kid Power, and live viewing festivals as part of field activation.

This $12.4M initiative will leverage an additional $31.6M in funding to create state-of-the-art soccer fields and uplift youth and communities, empowering people and transforming places. LISC has significant expertise deploying capital to develop recreation facilities and providing technical assistance to multi-sector partnerships that advance youth sport. Lionsraw has significant experience mobilizing soccer fans to transform communities, using soccer to engage, encourage and elevate the confidence of youth.
BUILDING SKILLS, BUILDING COMMUNITY

26x26 is a community-driven approach that will use soccer to generate an upward spiral of opportunity, equipping youth to transform their neighborhoods and their lives through sport. Young people will have access to safe playing fields in neighborhoods where LISC’s best-practice strategies for economic development, including quality housing, safety, workforce training, health, reinvestment, and active commercial areas, are at work. 26x26 will:

1. **Forge inclusive communities of opportunity.** 26x26 will promote the view that regardless of income or race, individuals should have access to safe and healthy communities with economic opportunity – and that sports can be a tool for shrinking the opportunity gap.

2. **Create or rehabilitate community spaces through the addition of soccer fields.** Introducing or rehabilitating a field can engage, connect and unite, and create a community asset. Vacant and blighted lots and parks in disrepair will return to productive use, improving the quality, safety and accessibility of soccer fields in low to moderate income neighborhoods. Youth living in the target communities will have increased access to recreational opportunities and to community programming that would otherwise be unavailable.

3. **Build capacity in local communities to facilitate and sustain youth sports and sports facilities.** 26x26 will enhance target communities’ efficacy and capacity to deliver youth sports programming by creating a cohort of partners committed to this goal. This will include sports organizations, schools, clubs, sports fans, local government, and other partners. LISC will help facilitate these partnerships and develop strategies to invest in related infrastructure (e.g., sports fields).

4. **Promote problem-solving and resiliency through a focus on youth sport.** The culture of team sport and the practice and training it requires, helps develop problem-solving skills and resiliency in those who participate. These are important life skills that provide a solid foundation for future challenges, faced on or off the field.

STRATEGY AND OUTCOMES

Our collaborative will work together to:

- Develop or rehabilitate 26 fields (20 in the U.S., 3 in Canada and 3 in Mexico), to be activated during the 2026 World Cup and sustained for soccer and youth team sport programming, for years to come. Through an RFP process administered by LISC, the 26x26 initiative will select 26 sites relevant to the UNITED World Cup bid, providing an average of $250,000 toward the cost of building or renovation of fields, training, operational support, and technical assistance. Local sites must match 26x26 grants, demonstrate field use, and provide proof of their ability to maintain fields and youth sport programming. Professional players, teams, community organizations, media, government, coaches, fans, volunteers, clubs, and schools will be engaged at national and local levels in support of these efforts.

- In 10 U.S. cities and one each in Mexico and Canada, field activation events involving sponsors, ambassadors and the American Outlaws will take place in conjunction with the group stages of the FIFA 2026 World Cup. Activation events will feature fan zones with live screenings of games, capacity-building
activities for youth soccer organizations, UNICEF Kid Power activities (described below), and branding opportunities for sponsors.

- Facilitate relationships with key community partners. LISC and Lionsraw will engage youth outreach programs, community leaders, youth soccer organizations, local teams, clubs and academies, matching assets with local needs and building capacity for team sport programming. Successful models that could be adapted include the Laureus Foundation’s ‘Sport for Good’ and Real Madrid Foundation’s ‘Train the Trainer’ initiatives. Lionsraw’s legacy management team will facilitate the implementation of best-practice soccer programming and youth leadership initiatives, working with selected sites from 2022 through field activation in 2025 and 2026.

- Integrate UNICEF’s Kid Power movement. At 12 field activations during the group stages of the 2026 World Cup (one in Mexico, one in Canada, and 10 in the USA), we will engage 25,000 youth from high need communities in physical activity and empower them to help save a child’s life through the UNICEF Kid Power movement. 26x26 will pair UNICEF Kid Power with students from local schools and youth sports programs to learn how they can transform their physical activity into lifesaving nutrition for malnourished children by using the Kid Power app or armband (often called a “Fitbit for kids”). More than 2,000 youth per site will receive an armband, which will track their activity and convert it into lifesaving therapeutic food supplied by UNICEF to kids in need. The mobile World Cup “mission” app will be used to take kids on fun and educational virtual missions related to soccer and participating World Cup counties.

- Activate “Ambassadors.” Celebrity media and athlete ambassadors will help catalyze awareness, resource development, and field activation, and work with LISC, Lionsraw, and youth soccer organizations to build capacity and develop youth soccer training in selected World Cup geographies in the run up to 2026 and during field activation. Potential Ambassadors include Fox Sport’s Rob Stone, BeIn Sports’ Kay Murray, Grant Wahl from Sports Illustrated and some of U.S. soccer’s most highly acclaimed and recognizable athletes (i.e., Christian Pulisic, Landon Donovan, Tim Howard, Abby Wambach, and Hope Solo).

- Engage the American Outlaws’ “AO Impact” community service corps of volunteers. The American Outlaws (AO) is the nation’s largest fan base of national team soccer, with 25,000 members in 197 chapters across the USA, Mexico and the UK. Their philanthropic arm, AO Impact, will organize their members into a volunteer corps, organizing manpower and resources on a national scale for the first time, in support of the 26x26 initiative.

**WHY PARTNER WITH US?:**

Your sponsorship will provide youth in high-need areas with access to sport as a means to transform their lives and communities. 26x26 will ensure ongoing interest in soccer, post-World Cup, and help communities benefit from the skill building, resilience, and sense of community that are achieved through team sport. Engaged sponsors will also benefit from priority access to field activation, branding on all marketing and promotional materials including video, ambassador and event access, and the opportunity to make the sponsor’s products and services accessible to participating youth, families, community leaders and media.
ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is the largest community development nonprofit in the U.S., impacting millions of Americans. With field offices in 31 cities and partners in more than 2,000 rural counties in 44 states, LISC empowers local leaders to realize community goals. Since 1979, LISC has forged resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America—great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families. We have invested $18.6 billion, leveraging $56.2 billion, creating 376,000 affordable homes, 63 million square feet of commercial, retail and community space, and have a ‘AA’ S&P rating.

We have a strong track-record promoting sport as a means to stabilize communities. More than 600,000 youth play on 350 fields and recreational spaces each year thanks to LISC’s Youth & Recreation Program. For 20 years, LISC has collaborated with the NFL Foundation on our joint Grassroots program to overhaul and build more than 350 high quality playing fields in 100 communities across the country. These fields of dreams built in distressed neighborhoods, where positive recreational outlets are scarce, become a refuge and a deterrent to gang activity and negative influences. The LISC/ESPN Home Court Program provides nonprofit, community-based organizations, middle schools and high schools with financing and technical assistance to improve the quality, safety and accessibility of local basketball courts. The LISC/ESPN/Under Armour Re-Play Program is a national effort to transform vacant lots into places for sports, recreation and play. An additional Under Armour/LISC partnership provides select Baltimore City Schools with financing and technical assistance to create or renovate recreational play spaces.

Lionsraw has, since 2010, completed nine community service soccer-related projects in seven countries in conjunction with major soccer tournaments across the world, including the UEFA European Championships and the FIFA World Cup, activating more than 1,000 volunteers and engaging more than 6,000 children. Projects include building a family-run orphanage and an elementary school in The Valley of a Thousand Hills in Durban, South Africa and a Soccer Training & Education Center in Brazil’s Cajaru District in Curitiba. Both projects were brought to fruition by a cadre of Lionsraw volunteers, in conjunction with a Lionsraw Legacy Tour at the FIFA World Cups of 2010 and 2014.

Lionsraw is a long-term partner of The American Outlaws, the largest fan organization in the US, and have recently launched AO Impact. AO Impact will mobilize and engage the organization’s 28,000 members into a volunteer corps for community service. Activities for the 26x26 World Cup project will include fundraising for field development, catalyzing RFP match funding and working with AO volunteers and 26x26 Ambassadors on capacity building, training and leadership programs in youth soccer.

American Outlaws, with more than 28,000 members, is the largest organized soccer supporters group in the world, with 197 chapters across the USA, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

UNICEF’s Kid Power is a program of UNICEF USA, a nonprofit supporting the world’s children through fundraising, advocacy and education in the United States.
BENEFITS OF YOUTH TEAM SPORTS: CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP

1. Teens who have practices, games, team dinners and fitness sessions have less time for mischief. A study in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine showed, “A survey of 14,000 teenagers found that those in team sports were less likely to use drugs, smoke, have sex, carry weapons or have unhealthy eating habits.”

2. Teams broaden a child’s social world and research shows team athletes are happier and healthier than those that don’t play sport. As reported in Science Daily, the study showed that among middle school teens who participated in team sports, “boys were five times more likely, and girls 30 times more likely, to describe their health as fair/poor when they were not playing on a sports team.”

3. A team introduces youth to a sense of belonging and common goals. Teams succeed and fail together and the value of group effort is reinforced every day. Beginning in middle school, cliques and mean girls can be social minefields. Boys can splinter apart into groups with well-defined lines. Sports teams cut across social divide, pulling together kids from disparate groups on campus and increasing the number of kids a child comes to know.

4. As youth grow older, they naturally develop their own lives and there are fewer ways for parents to be involved. Even teens determined to shut parents out, tolerate mom and dad attending games, providing an important source for ongoing connection.

5. Sport is one of the best places for kids to learn the importance of practice and determination. Teams set goals and thrive through cooperation, discipline and commitment. There is also the added element of teammates depending on an individual youth for participation and performance.

6. Competence and accomplishment that come with expertise and mastery of sport breed self-esteem and social well-being. Getting good at something through perseverance and repetitive hard work is one of life’s lessons. It is hard to teach in the abstract.

7. Athletics encourages strong, healthy bodies. Kids who compete know they are only at their best if they are well fed and well rested. Alcohol and drugs impede performance. In sports, strength and speed, rather than skinniness or other distorted body image, is desirable. Team sports help youth avoid obesity problems even more than activities like running or biking, according to recent research, which also notes that the typical child in the U.S. becomes 75% less active between the ages of 9-15.

8. A study, conducted by Kevin Kniffin, a behavioral science professor at Cornell University, shows that youth who played team sports in high school make better employees. They are looked upon more favorably by job interviewers, whether or not the interviewer was an athlete.

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2 http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/09/100922082330.htm
4 http://www.ithaca.com/sports/study-finds-long-term-effect-of-high-school-sports/article_ac5b03de-0d00-11e4-a564-001a4bd887a.html
### 26x26 TIMELINE

<table>
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| Jan 2018 – Dec 2020 | - Corporate partnership agreements – Develop relationships for 5 National Brand Partners; 1 Principle, 4 Lead  
- LISC and Lionsraw work to direct and leverage strategic flow of capital to people and communities with underdeveloped recreation assets  
- Build capacity at the local level to equip community partners to implement effective strategies  
- Foster on the ground collaboration by coordinating resources and actors across sectors and managing project implementation  
- Engage local leaders and residents to turn innovative ideas into practice, share methodologies across markets  
- Engage in national, state and local marketing |
| June 2018     | - FIFA World Cup 2026 Host announced; develop partnership MOUs, planning grants and seed funding  
- Begin resource development with partners to capitalize the 26x26 project  
- 26x26 Ambassadors activated |
| Sept 2018     | - Taskforce Meeting – New York City |
| Jan 2019      | - American Outlaws’ “Impact 26” campaign begins |
| March 2019    | - Visits commence with potential field location assessments and reporting |
| June 2019     | - 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup hosted by France |
| June 2020     | - UEFA European Championships hosted across Europe (12 locations in semi-final and finals in London, UK)  
- Lionsraw Legacy Tour 2020 (London), dry run for 2026 project planning and field activation |
| Jan 2021      | - City and field locations agreed by Lionsraw & LISC  
- RFPs released by LISC |
| Jan – Dec 2021| - Continuation of program/relationship management, Lionsraw & LISC promote the RFP process  
- Marketing & PR campaign to highlight RFP Process in chosen U.S. city locations |
| 2022          | - 2022 FIFA World Cup, hosted by Qatar |
| 2022          | - RFP process decided  
- 26 partners chosen, development work begins |
| 2023          | - Field preparation & development begins  
- Building work commences |
| 2023 – 2025   | - Building work continues  
- Lionsraw Community Program Management, assist with maintaining sustainable community soccer programs |
| 2025          | - Building work finishes on some soccer fields  
- Social Media Campaign picks up and Ambassadors engaged in 2026 World Cup Festivals  
- Planning for 2026 Field Activation begins, World Cup Soccer Festivals include programming, tournaments, watch parties and Sports-based STEM, etc. |
| June 2026     | - 2026 FIFA World Cup begins!  
- 26 soccer fields officially opened across North America  
- 12 Activation sites open, 2 weeks of soccer programming, tournaments, pickup games and viewing parties  
- Kid Power (UNICEF) Campaign begins |
| July 2026     | - WORLD CUP FINAL, Activation sites close, fields remain open |
| July 2026 - ? | - Work begins on further development of new soccer fields and Kid Power in cities across the USA |
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