

Iowa Lacrosse Association

Annual Report

2018-2019



Introduction

This is the first annual report of the Iowa Lacrosse Association (ILAX) after the organization was formed in June 2018 by the Ames, Ankeny and West Des Moines lacrosse clubs. These clubs had met regularly for about 18 months to discuss ways to cooperate in preparation for their spring seasons as well as sharing ideas on how to grow their programs. This cooperative effort led to the decision to form an association of youth clubs in the state to help each member grow.

In the weeks leading up to ILAX's inaugural board meeting, representatives from participating clubs created articles of incorporation and bylaws that would govern the new association. Subsequently, the clubs identified possible board members, and took steps to file as a non-profit corporation with the state of Iowa.

At the first ILAX board meeting on June 21, 2018, the board approved its articles of incorporation and by-laws, elected officers and began to discuss additional steps needed to get the Association established which included filing for 501c3 non-profit status with the IRS, purchasing insurance, creating a website and social media presence, and setting goals for the upcoming year.

Currently there are six member clubs in ILAX (Ames, Ankeny, Meskwaki Settlement, Quad Cities, Waukee and West Des Moines), and a membership invitation has been extended to the Dubuque Bulldog Lacrosse organization.

What follows is a brief summary of the "state of the game" in the state of Iowa, the efforts of the new association over the past year, and some preliminary thoughts on what ILAX plans to focus on over the next twelve months.

State of the game

There were nine youth lacrosse programs in Iowa this past spring season totaling 506 players registered. Most of those programs are located in central Iowa. They range from brand new efforts that have no formal organization to established non-profit clubs that have been in operation for several years. New programs this spring included those based in Waukee, Roosevelt High School and the Meskwaki Settlement in Tama. Here's a quick breakdown of spring 2019 registrations for all Iowa programs by total player counts:

Adel (new - youth girls)	14
Ames (boys only)	30
Ankeny	101
Dubuque (boys only)	42
Meskwaki (new - youth boys)	30
Quad Cities	37
Roosevelt High School (girls only)	10
Waukee (new - boys only)	83
West Des Moines	159
Total Statewide	506

For grade by grade breakdown of these registration results, please see the display at the end of the report. ILAX hopes to collect this statewide data every season to monitor growth and use as a tool to evaluate where resources are best deployed.

Over the past year there have been fledgling efforts to introduce lacrosse in Johnston, Mt. Vernon, Center Point, Iowa City, and Sioux City. Thanks in part to US Lacrosse grants and the support of local collegiate programs, there have been introductory clinics and programs in these communities. There have also been inquiries about starting youth programs in Grinnell and the Pella/Oskaloosa area.

The number of college lacrosse programs continue to grow in Iowa. There are now 11 men's and/or women's programs including Clark University, Cornell College, Dordt College (club), Iowa State University (club), University of Iowa (club), Loras College, Morningside College, St. Ambrose University, University of Dubuque, Upper Iowa University, Wartburg College, and William Penn University. According to US Lacrosse, lacrosse continues to be the fastest growing sport with NCAA member schools.

ILAX goals & progress

With the basic organizational tasks completed, the Association identified several goals to pursue in its first year:

Expand communications within the Iowa lacrosse community — ILAX thought it critical to develop relationships with all known youth organizations in the state, and has done so. The board has made personal contact and many have attended ILAX board meetings through the past year. The Association and those organizations have connected with US Lacrosse resources through their Midwest representative, Bryce Woodson. Finally, ILAX worked with all clubs that have boys youth teams to establish league play this past spring.

Grow the game in other parts of the state — ILAX was formed principally to grow the game in the state, and in its first year acted as a resource to start-ups in Adel, the Meskwaki Settlement in Tama, and Roosevelt High School in Des Moines.

ILAX has also targeted the Iowa City/Cedar Rapids area to start youth lacrosse. After identifying possible stakeholders in that part of the state, ILAX hosted a kick-off meeting on March 17 in Iowa City with many of those stakeholders. The Association found a great deal of enthusiasm as several area parks & rec departments attended and were seeking help introducing beginner lacrosse programs.

Jeff Kueter, a lacrosse parent who lives in Iowa City, is representing ILAX and coordinating their efforts to introduce beginner lacrosse programs and promote the sport in the area. As of this writing, Iowa City Parks & Rec has already offered lacrosse clinics and several other city parks & rec departments in the area are planning to do the same in the near future. ILAX support of this effort will be ongoing.

Establish a competitive league — Member clubs wanted a league structure this past spring for middle school boys (U10, U12, U14). In response the ILAX board decided to create the Iowa Youth Lacrosse League, and played a key role in scheduling and managing league games. The League successfully completed its first season with all seven clubs with youth boys programs in the state participating. League play culminated on June 1 with the championship playoffs as part of the Iowa Games in Ankeny.

Recruit and train officials — Due to the growth of the sport, the board decided last fall to help recruit and train new officials. Kevin Hawn, a local boys official, is heading up the ILAX effort for the men's game, and board member and coach, Meghan Gruver, agreed to help with the women's game.

The board targeted two audiences to recruit from: 1) networking for candidate ideas through individual club parents & coaches; and 2) existing officials from other sports mostly through the Des Moines Officials Association (DMOA) which is primarily made up of football and basketball officials. The club networking effort didn't yield many candidates, and the board felt we would have better results by concentrating on the DMOA and other officials' organizations located around the state.

Kevin and Meghan attended a winter DMOA meeting and were able to make a pitch for lacrosse as an option. The DMOA also distributed ILAX recruiting information where ILAX, with help from US Lacrosse, would provide free training in late winter and spring. The results of our recruiting and training efforts have been modest, especially on the women's game side.

Future ILAX efforts

Looking ahead to the 2019-2020 period, ILAX needs to continue its efforts with most of the goals established last year as they will take time to accomplish. It also will tackle a couple of additional goals in the coming year. Here's a brief summary of what the board will focus on:

Continue to recruit/train officials — With modest results this past spring, ILAX needs to continue to attract new officials and offer training prior to next season. This is especially true for women's officials. It will re-double its marketing efforts with the DMOA, look again for networking opportunities throughout the lacrosse community, and consider new communication methods to get the word out to potential new candidates. It will rely on US Lacrosse for training assistance, and may offer multiple training opportunities to meet candidates' varying schedules.

Support Iowa City/Cedar Rapids efforts — The Association has a nice start and a lot of interest in getting lacrosse started in this part of the state. ILAX representative, Jeff Kueter, has recently shared an update with our board that outlines what local parks & rec departments have done and are willing to do to introduce lacrosse to area youth. He identified some pending initiatives, key resource needs, and the challenge of offering a pathway to team play as players begin to take up the sport.

ILAX will support these efforts by continuing to organize and coordinate individual clinic offerings; helping these departments secure US Lacrosse equipment grants to help new players get started; identifying lacrosse players and coaches that can assist with teaching the game; and providing promotional and communication support to get the word out about these opportunities.

Support league play — After a successful inaugural 14U/12U Boys League last season, the board is looking to continue to offer and possibly expand league competition next spring. More clubs are expected to field U10 boys teams which would benefit from our league option, and a girls middle school/youth division might start if there's enough interest and participation. There are plans to enhance the amount of league information available on the ILAX website as well as make ILAX involvement more visible at the larger league events during the season.

Expand visibility around the state — ILAX is conducting a workshop in September for the Iowa Parks & Rec Association in Ames. The workshop will help attendees better understand

the game of lacrosse and how to introduce it in their communities. ILAX plans to attend their state convention next March as well as exhibit at the Iowa Athletic Directors Association convention in Coralville next spring. The board also hopes to visit both the high school boys and girls athletic associations in Boone and West Des Moines to introduce our organization.

Develop relationships with college programs — To date ILAX has had limited contact with most college programs in Iowa. The board feels it's important to work with all Iowa collegiate programs to grow the game and strengthen relationships with member clubs. Over the next year, ILAX will try to schedule on-campus visits with college coaches around the state to assess their interest in working with the Association and possible membership at some point.

Solicit more help — As ILAX takes on more initiatives and responsibilities for the benefit of its members, it will need more manpower and funding. While the board doesn't expect a large increase in member funding requests this coming year, we definitely need more people to step up to help us with these initiatives. ILAX is considering creating new support roles as well as committees within the Association and will be approaching member clubs about filling them.

Financial Status

As of this writing, ILAX has \$960.41 in its checking account. Last August the Association went to member clubs and requested \$3095 in initial funding. The funding request was based on anticipated start-up costs for the new organization with the largest anticipated expenses involving purchasing a website platform, acquiring insurance, creating marketing materials, and paying filing fees to the state of Iowa and the IRS.

Conclusion

The Association is off to a good start and we greatly appreciate the support of our member clubs. For the foreseeable future ILAX will continue to focus on bringing the Iowa lacrosse community together to support each other. It will also look for opportunities to promote lacrosse and introduce the game to under-served parts of the state. With the continued support of our members, ILAX will expand services as the fastest-growing sport in the country takes hold in Iowa.

This report is submitted by the board of directors of the Iowa Lacrosse Association.



“Helping to grow the game”