National Program for the Development of Nordic Walking in North America

2027–2030

Introduction: NWANA's Goals and Current Projects

Nordic Walking is developing in North America through the efforts of many organizations and instructors: local groups and programs operate, independent training schools are active, and manufacturers and sellers offer equipment. The NWANA National Program creates a common infrastructure and professional leadership for this development.

The organizer of the program is the Nordic Walking Association of North America (NWANA), the continental federation of the sport. The federation already has operating development tools in place: the Academy, an educational platform with instructor training courses; a virtual competition system that operates in 2026 and unites participants from different states over distances from 1 to 20 kilometers; the NW Groups platform of local groups; the Charity Challenge series of charitable events; and published safety and participant protection policies.

The 2027–2030 program develops ten directions simultaneously: sport, education, training centers, regional development, organizational development, institutional recognition, science and health, market development, national partnerships, and financing and management. The directions develop in parallel; each has its own plan within the overall program, and the real dependencies between them are taken into account in the stages.

1. Direction: Sport

NWANA is developing a national and continental sport system for Nordic Walking: mass participation activities and competitions, the Virtual Series with remote participation, regional sport events, United States championships and North American championships. The federation develops the rules, competition formats, an officiating system and opportunities for athletes of different age categories and preparation levels to participate. The operating part of the system today is the virtual Open Series 2026, with rankings within the series. NWANA forms a sport calendar at the national and continental level and organizes competitions within its own sport system; officials training, athlete licensing and the sanctioning of external competitions develop as separate lines of the program's work. NWANA plans to develop and test an AI officiating system for analyzing Nordic Walking technique and detecting rule violations from video recordings.

Each form of participation is independent: a participant chooses any of them and may combine several. Eligibility and qualification rules are established separately for each competition and each form of participation. The system is held together by unified sport rules and classifications, including Masters age groups; the officiating corps is created within the program. Competitions give the system participation data: the number of participants, their age, geography and engagement dynamics.

2. Direction: Education

Education is the engine of scaling: the network grows at the speed at which the system prepares specialists. NWANA's education system unites the Academy with its online learning, practical training at training centers and field practical training in the regions.

Instructor training proceeds through sequential stages. The first stage is the online course in the Academy, which ends with two examinations: a theoretical examination, testing knowledge, and a practical examination, testing the candidate's own Nordic Walking technique by video recording. After passing both examinations, the specialist receives an NWANA certificate of completion for the course. The certificate confirms the training and mastery of basic technique, and with it the instructor begins to lead sessions for beginners independently and accumulates practical teaching experience; a license is not required to begin such sessions. The next stage is the instructor license, professional recognition of a specialist with real teaching experience. The candidate shows NWANA their practical work: how their sessions run, how they demonstrate the technique, explain it to participants, and notice and correct their errors. NWANA evaluates this work and makes an individual decision; with a positive evaluation, the candidate purchases the paid license. The certificate and the passed examinations by themselves do not confer a right to the license, and payment does not guarantee its issuance. The license confirms that NWANA has verified the instructor's practical experience and qualification and officially recognizes their compliance with the association's standards.

The right to train other instructors is a separate authority. NWANA grants it to specially selected specialists, and it operates within the federation's quality control system.

Unified professional standards apply to all organizations of the network regardless of sector and state. The system includes professional development for active instructors. NWANA is creating a national registry of licensed instructors, through which a specialist's qualification can be verified.

3. Direction: Training Centers

NWANA is creating its own training center: practical sessions, instructor training, technique assessment and improvement, professional development, educator preparation, and the development and advancement of methodologies. The Academy provides online education, and the training center provides the practical component of training.

The first center becomes the federation's working base and a model for developing a network of regional training centers. Regional centers are created and developed under NWANA's professional leadership, with unified standards of training and quality control. Partners may provide sites for the centers; the content of the education system and the preparation of specialists remain with NWANA.

The management of the centers is built according to the program's forms of organizational development. NWANA directly manages its own centers and programs. In joint projects, and under affiliation and contractual cooperation, management and responsibility are determined by the chosen model and the agreements of the parties. NWANA defines the standards and the procedure for certification and licensing within its programs.

The creation of the first center and the development of the network proceed in parallel with the program's other directions: the Academy, field training and the sport calendar develop both before the center opens and together with it.

4. Direction: Regional Development

Regional development carries out NWANA's practical work in the regions. The federation's field teams conduct training and practical preparation of specialists on site and support the launch of local programs: the first sessions take place under the federation's guidance, and local programs then develop in the form of cooperation chosen by the parties. Field training develops both before regional centers open and together with them.

NWANA launches its own and joint programs in the regions and supports local initiatives. Regional anchors, strong local organizations, spread development further: they share experience with neighboring organizations, host regional events and help new members of the network start faster.

5. Direction: Organizational Development

NWANA chooses and combines forms of organizing its work depending on the tasks, resources and region. The program provides for several forms: NWANA's own regional subdivisions and centers under its direct management; affiliated organizations working to the federation's standards; contractual and joint projects with partners; and cooperation with independent organizations that turn to NWANA for instructor training, use its educational opportunities and take part in its competitions.

NWANA directly manages its own subdivisions, centers and programs. In joint projects, and under affiliation and contractual cooperation, management and responsibility are determined by the chosen model and the agreements of the parties. Independent organizations manage their own programs independently. NWANA defines the standards and the procedure for certification and licensing within its programs.

6. Direction: Institutional Recognition

NWANA works to include Nordic Walking in the sport, educational, professional and public systems of North America. This work rests on the federation's own tools: unified sport rules and classifications, professional standards of training and licensing, a competition system at the national and continental level, participation data, and the research results of the science and health direction.

Recognition develops as a result of the work of the whole system: the wider the education, competitions and participation, the stronger the position of the sport in national structures.

7. Direction: Science and Health

Together with universities and research organizations, NWANA studies the impact of Nordic Walking on health and physical conditioning and forms the scientific base of the sport. One of the federation's tasks is to check how published studies describe the walking technique, the preparation of participants and the control of its performance. The completeness of this information determines exactly which technique a study examined and how far its results apply to Nordic Walking in the form in which NWANA teaches it.

In joint studies, NWANA takes part in developing the protocol and is responsible for the preparation of participants and the control of Nordic Walking technique. If a study requires the participation of trained athletes, NWANA helps select participants with confirmed technique. If a study is conducted with people without Nordic Walking experience, NWANA specialists train them before the start of the main measurements. Throughout the study, NWANA specialists check the performance of the technique and record deviations under a protocol agreed with the research partners. As the program develops, this work is performed by specialists trained and licensed by NWANA.

Research partners are responsible for the methodology of the study, the analysis and the interpretation of its results. Participation statistics provided by the sport system and the program network are accounted for separately from the results of health research and are used to formulate research questions and design studies.

8. Direction: Market Development

The market is created by the same system as participation. Operating programs purchase equipment sets. Participants purchase personal poles and gear. The sports trade receives a formed category and participation data. Manufacturers receive an institutional channel and a growing user base. NWANA works with manufacturers, the trade and industry associations on developing the category and professional services around the sport.

The connection between the parts of the program forms a growth cycle: education prepares instructors, instructors launch programs, programs bring participants, participants create competitions and demand for equipment, and the visible market and sport results attract new organizations, and the cycle repeats at a larger scale.

9. Direction: National Partnerships

NWANA is creating a national network for the development of Nordic Walking and cooperates with cities, schools, universities, sport associations, corporations, foundations and community organizations. The federation unites interested organizations, provides educational programs, organizes practical training of specialists, establishes professional and sport standards and develops a common competition system. Partners use this infrastructure to create their own Nordic Walking programs with their own employees and at their own sites.

The scaling mechanism begins with NWANA's work: the federation develops educational and sport programs, organizes the training and certification of instructors, creates conditions for organizations

to connect, and coordinates the national network. National and regional associations introduce the sport discipline to their member organizations. Interested local organizations independently introduce Nordic Walking into their own programs, using trained specialists, sites and audiences.

NWANA directly manages its own subdivisions, centers and programs. In joint projects, and under affiliation and contractual cooperation, management and responsibility are determined by the chosen model and the agreements of the parties. Independent organizations manage their own programs independently. NWANA defines the standards and the procedure for certification and licensing within its programs. The procedure for the training, certification and licensing of instructors is uniform for the whole network and is set out in the education section.

The network grows in waves: organizations with ready infrastructure and audiences enter first, followed by their regional structures and partners. Each wave increases the number of trained instructors, operating programs and participants, and this strengthens the sport system and the market, which make the entry of the next wave of organizations simpler and more attractive.

10. Direction: Financing and Management

The development of the program is financed jointly from several sources: commercial partners, industry initiatives of companies, sponsors of programs and events, foundations and grants, and NWANA's own revenues. Financing proceeds in stages and is tied to the stages of the program's development.

NWANA is creating a central headquarters for the work of the leadership and the professional team. The headquarters provides the management of the federation, the coordination of the national program and work with partners. The implementation plan defines the placement format, and the financial plan accounts for the costs of launching and maintaining the headquarters as a separate line item.

Financing is raised for NWANA's own work of creating the system: training centers and their network, the preparation of specialists, education and certification, sport infrastructure and competitions, national coordination and methodological support, and the ongoing paid work of the leadership and professional team of NWANA. The creation and development of the network of training centers is a separate financing direction; its parameters, including the model of premises, equipment and specialist staffing, are determined in the program's financial plan.

Partners finance or organize the financing of development and receive commercial and public opportunities in the system being created and in the market being created. Standards, certification and sport rules are within the federation's remit and are determined by its professional decisions. Each financing is formalized by a separate agreement. Detailed budgets, stages and sources are given in the program's separate financial plan.

11. What Participation in the NWANA System Provides

For school districts: a structured sport for students and employees, the preparation of their own teachers as instructors, and the participation of schools in national virtual competitions directly from their own cities.

For universities: educational programs and student activity, a platform for research into physical activity and health, and the preparation of specialists for the whole system.

For cities and park systems: accessible activity programs for residents of all ages at a low cost of infrastructure, and events that unite districts and generations.

For employers: employee activity programs that are led by trained internal instructors of the organization.

For sport organizations: the opportunity to include Nordic Walking in their own sport programs and events with NWANA's support in the area of rules and the organization of competitions at the national and continental level.

For medical and community organizations and programs for older adults: regular group activity in the open air with trained instructors and safety standards, and participation in forming the evidence base of the sport.

For manufacturers and the sports trade: a new equipment category, the institutional demand of programs and the personal demand of a growing number of participants.

An organization that has joined the system already today receives access to NWANA's operating tools: Academy courses for the preparation of its specialists, participation in the Virtual Series under unified rules and the national calendar, and a professional network of organizations that run the same programs and share experience.

Within the program, NWANA creates the following opportunities for participants: the licensing of instructors based on the evaluation of their real teaching work and a national registry of licensed specialists; a ready model for launching a program and the federation's methodological support at the start and in development; national measurements of participation, geography and the development of the sport, which strengthen the positions of each organization in its own work and reporting.

12. Development Stages, 2027–2030

The program is designed for 2027–2030 and develops in stages. The first stage, 2027–2028, is set out by phases at 6, 12 and 24 months. The second stage, 2029–2030, is defined by goals and the conditions for achieving them. The directions develop in parallel: the stages show NWANA's results in each direction at each phase and the real dependencies between the works. The results at 6, 12 and 24 months are planned benchmarks. Timelines are refined in the implementation plan taking into account financing, the readiness of the team and the sites. The quantitative benchmarks of the program, including the number of programs launched and specialists undergoing training, are established in the implementation plan as calculated indicators and are reconciled with the financial plan.

The first 6 months. Sport: the Virtual Series operates as a national participation calendar, unified rules and competition formats are in effect, and the training of officials has begun. Education: the Academy conducts the preparation of specialists, and the first groups complete online learning and practical training. Training centers: NWANA defines the format of the first center and the requirements for the sports complex, and evaluates suitable sites and the composition of the team. The budget of the launch and operation and the timelines are determined based on the results of the site evaluation. Regional development: field teams conduct practical training and program launches in the first regions, including the preparation of instructors before the center opens. Organizational development: the first own and joint forms of work in the regions are operating, and the models of affiliation and contractual cooperation are formalized. Institutional recognition: NWANA works with sport, educational and public structures on the recognition of the discipline and its standards. Science and health: the first research partnerships and research questions are defined, and participation data are used to design them. Market: the equipment category is being formed, the first programs purchase sets, and work with manufacturers and the trade has begun. Partnerships: the national network is launched, uniting organizations open the sport to their members, and the first local programs are operating. Financing and management: financing of the first phase is raised by direction, the paid professional team of the program is formed within the volume of the financing raised, and NWANA defines the requirements for the headquarters and evaluates options for its placement.

12 months. Sport: the national calendar expands with regional events, and the training of officials and sport specialists continues under the sport plan. Education: training and professional development operate regularly, and the first educators receive NWANA authority. Training centers: NWANA selects a site, forms a team and raises financing. The first center opens after confirmation of the readiness of the site and the team and the securing of financing for the launch and current operation. Regional development: field training covers new regions, and own and joint programs develop. Organizational development: the forms of presence are combined by region, and affiliated and contractual projects are operating. Institutional recognition: work on including the discipline in sport, educational and public systems continues, resting on participation data and research. Science and health: the first studies are launched jointly with universities and research organizations. Market: the institutional demand of programs and the personal demand of participants are growing, and the category develops together with manufacturers and the trade. Partnerships: the network covers organizations in different states, and local programs hold regular sessions. Financing and management: financing of the second phase is raised, and the leadership and the team work on an ongoing paid basis within the volume of the financing raised.

24 months. Sport: the calendar of national and continental competitions includes the United States and North American championships, and the officiating corps is formed. Education: the system of training, certification and licensing operates in full, and the national registry of licensed instructors is in effect. Training centers: NWANA continues the preparation of the first center until its opening. After the launch, the federation evaluates its work and on this basis makes decisions on the development of the regional network, taking into account demand, the readiness of sites and teams, and the secured financing. Regional development: NWANA continues the field training of specialists and develops local programs. Organizational development: NWANA combines its own subdivisions, affiliation, joint projects and cooperation with independent organizations across the whole network.

Institutional recognition: the positions of the sport in sport, educational and public systems are strengthened by the results of the system's work. Science and health: research results are published and used in the development of programs and in the work on recognition. Market: the market of equipment and professional services is formed as a growing category. Partnerships: the network expands its presence and the depth of cooperation in all categories of organizations. Financing and management: the financing of the program is diversified by source, and NWANA's own revenues grow together with the system.

2029–2030: goals and conditions. At the second stage, NWANA develops the results of the first stage across all ten directions. Sport: the United States and North American championships take a permanent place in the continental calendar, and the inclusion of Nordic Walking in the sport systems of states and in national games develops under agreements with their organizers. Education: the Academy prepares specialists at all levels of preparation, and the national registry of licensed instructors operates as a public tool for verifying qualifications. Training centers: the first center opens based on the results of the site evaluation and with secured financing; NWANA makes the decision on developing the network of centers based on the results of the work of the first center, if it is open by that time. Regional development: the network of organizations covers most states and grows through the efforts of regional teams with the federation's methodological support. Organizational development: own subdivisions, affiliation and joint projects develop in the forms that confirmed their suitability at the first stage. Institutional recognition: Nordic Walking enters the catalogs, standards and programs of national organizations in the profile of each direction. Science and health: joint studies with universities produce published results that support the work on evidence-based recognition. Market development: the Nordic Walking category is steadily represented in institutional channels, and operating programs and participants create constant demand for equipment. National partnerships: the network includes organizations of all categories of the program, and commercial partners develop the market together with NWANA on a contractual basis. Financing and management: the work of the federation is financed from the totality of sources across all directions, and the headquarters operates as a permanent center for managing the program. The scale and timelines of the results of the second stage are determined by the results of the first stage, the volume of financing raised, and the readiness of the team and the sites.

Program development indicators: the number of training centers and their geography, the number of organizations in the network, the number of specialists who have completed training and the number of licensed instructors, the number of operating programs, the number of sport events and participants, and the volume and structure of the equipment market.