

## PROPOSAL MEMORANDUM

**To:** Brooke Bacak, Managing Partner  
**From:** Bailey Blake, Charlotte Brenner, Olivia Candelino, Stephanie Frey, Casey Stutz, Associates  
**Date:** April 27, 2023  
**Subject:** Proposed Strategic Communications Campaign for the Colorado Rapids

Attached is the draft strategic communications proposal prepared for our client, the Colorado Rapids. The Colorado Rapids are a professional soccer club who are a part of Major League Soccer, specifically in the Western Conference. Their home base is Dick's Sporting Goods Park located in Commerce City, CO. The main challenge they face is getting people to buy in on the franchise in terms of fan loyalty and attendance.

The proposal includes:

- **research background** synthesizing relevant findings,
- a **situation analysis** characterizing the current situation, as revealed by research,
- a statement of the client's **core problem [or opportunity]**,
- a **goal statement**, reflecting the campaign's desired overall result,
- **objectives** stating the specific results necessary to achieve the campaign goal,
- the campaign's "**big idea**" creative strategy,
- a description of the **key publics** critical to achieving campaign objectives,
- the **messages, strategies, and tactics** designed to reach and motivate each key public,
- a **calendar** depicting the campaign timeline, and
- a **budget** outline projecting the relative expense associated with each key public.

Upon your approval, a copy of this written proposal will be presented to the Colorado Rapids' representatives for consideration.

# PROPOSAL

## INTRODUCTION

*The Colorado Rapids are a professional soccer organization that plays within Major League Soccer. The Rapids do not have a clear mission statement but the mission of their club shows through their jerseys which exhibits sponsor UC Health in their mutual commitment to encourage fans, club partners, and the Colorado community to join the team and commit to living their best, Colorado healthy lives. In the past, their fan base has been down, but they have the opportunity to grow and develop fan loyalty through attendance, interaction and so much more.*

## Part 1: Research

### **Background:**

- External Environment
  - The projected market size in the US for all professional sports is 83.1 billion USD. This is a huge industry that is increasing every year.
  - Interest in soccer is growing every year with 2019 breaking the record of the most US high school students playing soccer in history (850,000 kids)
  - The demand for sports media continues to grow with an abundance of games, talk shows, podcasts, and written articles being released on a daily and weekly basis.
- Industry
  - The MLS's main competition is the other well-known major league sports such as the NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB. With these fanbases already existing it's difficult to build a fan base when there are so many strong ones that already exist. Their [conference structure](#) is similar to the NFL, however, they play more games in a season than the NFL
  - They are the [least-valued team](#) in the MLS. Revenue is listed at \$33 million with \$5 million in losses.
  - Their promotional activities include [theme](#) nights at games. They have three this season as of now including Kick Childhood Cancer, Hispanic Heritage Night, and Fan Appreciation Night. They also had a contest last year with Dick's Sporting Goods and the winner received two tickets, a round-trip flight for two, and hotel accommodations. They're also holding a season [kick-off party](#) with photo stations, music, interactive experiences, a player fashion show, and drinks for purchase. The event is free but there will be a raffle for one lucky winner to win their Community Kit.
- Market share and competition
  - After the 2022 season, Colorado Rapids are valued at [\\$400 million](#), 8% of all MLS teams, the second worst in the entire MLS.

- In 2022, the Rockies averaged [32,467](#) fans per game, the Broncos averaged [75,980](#), the Avalanche averaged [17,458](#), Rapids averaged [14,473](#)
- The MLS total average is 21,006, Colorado is well below this average
- In 2021 the Rapids were ranked in last place in terms of value at 370 million USD (27th place)
- Stakeholder research
  - The Colorado Rapids have been [owned by Kroenke Sports Enterprises since 2004](#)
  - With Stanley Kroenke in charge, [he has experience within Arsenal's club and a net worth of \\$12.9B](#)
  - He also owns the Nuggets, and Avalanche and is [responsible for moving the Rams back to LA from St. Louis](#)
- Internal environment
  - They just introduced a new kit to raise awareness for [mental health](#)
    - A Colorado artist designed the new kits and shared his experience with mental health
  - They are heavily focusing on this campaign this year the Rapids won the [MLS cup](#) in 2010
  - They have a [youth league](#) with over 100 young athletes
  - Their stadium holds 18,000 people and they have 23 surrounding fields
- Product or service
  - For the 2023 season, they are coupling their “product” of soccer entertainment with massive campaigns for mental health awareness. The Rapids’ corporate partners (major sponsors) are Dick’s Sporting Goods, Adidas, Toyota, Coca-cola, UC Health, BodyArmor, Allstate, Ticketmaster, Tide, etc.
  - Altitude Sports partnership through owner Stan Kroenke, major media for the area
  - Theme nights- kick cancer night, Hispanic heritage night, and fan appreciation night
  - Centennial 38- the official fan supporters group for the Rapids
- Promotions
  - UCHealth is the [largest sponsor currently](#) (logo on new jerseys) and the past big-name sponsor was Transamerica
    - A new sponsor chose to “restore Colorado as the healthiest state in the nation” with their new “Ready. Set. Co.” campaign
  - MLS VP/Brand and Integrated Marketing David Bruce says that [half of the MLS media budget](#) goes to Facebook for in-tune messaging that ranges from 10 to 15 seconds.
    - This is not a platform that people of all ages check regularly. More of this budget needs to be focused on platforms that hit larger demographics like Instagram and Twitter (add in TikTok for younger generations)
- Resources

- The stadium is called [Dick's Sporting Goods Park and holds about 18,000](#)
  - It is [16 years old and cost about \\$131M](#) to build with facilities within it for players' use
- They have [24 full-size and lit sports fields](#)
- They also have a youth academy ([Colorado Rapids Youth Soccer Club](#)) allowing for a path for the future

### **Situation Analysis:**

More Americans watch baseball, basketball, and football than soccer. Only 32% of Americans consider themselves soccer fans, but that number can grow with investors and public engagement. This gives them the potential to work with youth groups because more US high school students play soccer than ever before and 31% of 18-34-year-olds in the US are fans of soccer. The interest in soccer from America's youth is continually growing. A streaming service partnership with Apple TV allows fans to access post and pre-game content. The Washington Post cited that 12% of Americans felt basketball is their favorite sport to watch, 11% said baseball and 8% said Soccer. These metrics being three and four percentage points from each other paint a very hopeful future for American soccer. The Colorado Rapids averages 14,000 fans per game in a stadium that can hold a maximum of 18,000. We understand that soccer does not have a strong fan base like other pro sports, but there's growth potential, especially with the U.S. holding the FIFA World Cup in 2026.

One difficulty is engaging fans even when our team isn't doing remarkably well. We will have to create a better gameday atmosphere, like other teams in the league, to get fans to attend games. They also have a youth academy called Colorado Rapids Youth Soccer Club, which will allow the team a path for the future. Focusing on the data above that most soccer fans are US high school students and 31% of the MLS fan base is Gen Z, creates a huge opening for the team. The Colorado Rapids are also seen as the least valued team in the MLS between their fan base, their revenue, and their performance. Through our research, we found that the team plans on growing defensively as that's where they need the most work, and they are signing multiple players to create a strong team and re-energize supporters.

**Core Problem/Opportunity:** Colorado Rapids have an opportunity to grow its fan base, however, if they fail to increase their engagement they may be bumped down to the USL or inevitably become bankrupt.

### **Part 2: Goals and Objectives**

**Goal:** To grow the overall franchise and further establish the Colorado Rapids in the Denver area, but more specifically in Colorado as a whole.

## Objectives:

- **Attendance:** Raise current average attendance from 14,473 to 18,000 for at least one game by October, the end of the season, and nine games within the next three seasons, measured by ticket sales.
- **Social Media Following:** Raise social media following on Instagram from 103,000 to 150,000 by October, the end of the season, measured by social media analytics.
- **Social Media Engagement:** Increase overall engagement including likes from their average of 833 to 1,000 and average comments from 20 to 40 by October, the end of the season, measured by social media analytics.
- **Donations for the Mental Health Home Kit Campaign:** Whichever youth team fundraises the most for the mental health campaign the Colorado Rapids' new home kits are supporting will win a practice in the Dick's Sport Goods' field and a pizza party with the Colorado Rapids players.

## Part 3: Big Idea

**Big Idea:** We want to include the community in the Rapids fanbase by creating a sense of home at Rapids games. We want to create promotions for friends and families to come to games together. We want to specifically speak to the Colorado youths to start their fan experience at a young age.

**1. Big idea strategy:** We want to involve the entire Colorado community by creating a sense of "home" in the home team. We want to grow up with our fanbase starting with the youth.

**2. Visual representation:** Billboard, social media posts, website visual of mountains with "Home is where the Rapids are," make t-shirts and give them away at games with the slogan "Home is where the Rapids are."

**3. Slogan/hashtag:** "Home is where the Rapids are"

## Part 4: Key Publics

**Introduction:** We have three key publics including Denver-area sports media subscribers, Rapids' Youth Soccer Club and Denver-area sports media subscribers. These involve varying ages to reach a specific public. Sport media subscribers between the ages of 18-30 target more modern generations to bring into the Rapids family. Rapids' Youth Soccer Club varies around children from the young age of three up to 18 years old before they head to college. This helps develop these kids to grow up with the club and build a community for future Rapids. The third public constitutes older generational people through the ages of 31-55. This group may not be as equipped with social media but is a large part of the Denver area and the nurturing of the Rapids family.

**Key Public #1:** Denver-area sport media subscribers ages 18-30: Sport media subscribers are those who attend football, hockey, basketball and baseball games in the Denver area. They find pride in their Colorado-based sports teams such as the Denver Nuggets, Denver Broncos, Colorado Rockies, Colorado Avalanche and the Colorado Rapids. The sports media subscribers want access to cheap tickets, but they are willing to spend more for big games when they matter. People in the age group of 18-30 are usually vibrant, active and healthy, friendship and relationship-focused, while also potentially starting their childbearing years or their careers. This age group is digital-focused as well and can be considered Millennials or Gen-Z. This key public will focus on accomplishing objectives 1-3 due to the fact that they are social media (digital age) and attendance-related.

**Key Public #2:** Youth Soccer Club til ages 3-17: There are about 10,000 kids that are a part of the Colorado Rapids youth soccer team. Each age group within the soccer club helps accomplish objective 4 because it is targeted to them in its entirety. As the children get older they will help accomplish more than just objectives 1 and 4, but also objectives 2 and 3. Children ages 6-8 show more independence, think about their future, they pay more attention to teamwork and others. Ages 9-11 are going through puberty, they have increased attention spans, and they are also experiencing more peer pressure, which may come as an advantage as they can be influenced by their friends and parents. Ages 12-14 show more interest in groups and teams, focus on themselves, and develop senses of right and wrong. They are also forming stronger relationships and maybe having access to their first phone and social media. Allowing them to help accomplish objectives 2 and 3. Lastly, ages 15-17, have most likely found a love for the sport and the team to be continuing to play at this age. They have defined work habits, care about spending time with friends and family, and show concern for others and their future. They show passion and excitement as well as a strong love for technology thus leading them to help accomplish all 4 objectives.

**Key Public #3:** Denver-area sport media subscribers ages 31-55: Sport media subscribers are those who attend football, hockey, basketball and baseball games in the Denver area. They find pride in their Colorado-based sports teams such as the Denver Nuggets, Denver Broncos, Colorado Rockies, Colorado Avalanche and the Colorado Rapids. The sports media subscribers want access to cheap tickets, but they are willing to spend more for big games when they matter. People in the age group of 31-55 usually have teams they are loyal to and have been to for multiple years. This age group is more loyalty-based and pays more attention to traditional media forms. This key public will focus on objectives 1 and 2.

## Part 5: Messages, Strategies and Tactics

### Messages and Strategies

**Objective:** Raise current average attendance from 14,473 to 18,000 for at least one game by October, the end of the season, and nine games within the next three seasons, measured by ticket sales.

### Key Public 1: Denver-area sports media subscribers ages 18-30

Self-interests:

- going to football, basketball, and baseball games in the Denver area
  - pride in their sports teams
  - Want cheap tickets, but willing to spend more for big games
- **Primary Message 1:** Comment, repost, and tag your Denver-sports-loving friends to enter for free tickets and an additional prize pack
    - **Secondary messages** for 1st primary message
      - We have a wide range of ticket prices, \$25-\$100, for every family to enjoy gameday their own way.
      - Family night has never been better with our discounted family ticket package.
      - Experience VIP treatment at the VIP lounge! Some of the promotions include VIP lounge tickets, signed merch, \$100 to the merchandise store, gift card to Dick's Sporting Goods.
      - It's a family reunion! Comment, repost, and tag for a chance to win a meet and greet with the team after the game.
        - There will be five 3rd place winners, three 2nd place winners, and one grand prize winner.
  - **Primary Message 2:** Come join the best House Party in the MLS
    - **Secondary messages** for 2nd primary message:
      - Come join the house party!
      - Follow our social media to be up to date about ticket packages and giveaways!
      - Buy through the link in our bio for special packages with drink/hotdog included.

### Message Delivery:

**Strategy 1:** Promote these media subscribers through platforms like TikTok and Instagram to create a team loyalty that will carry into their futures.

#### Tactics:

- Utilize interactive posts that require followers to tag friends.

- Create a giveaway that involves meeting the players who won through social media tagging, following, and liking.
- Create TikTok and Instagram posts consistently so the Rapids' will show up in more people's algorithms.

**Strategy 2:** Make 'Join the House Party' a popular statement used by this demographic.

**Tactics:**

- Create it as a trending hashtag on social media posts which enters them to win promos (like free merch or signed autographs) or ticket packages as mentioned above when utilized.
- Have players use it in their own posts to put it out on platforms and make it a trending phrase.
- Repost and highlight fans who use the hashtag on their own posts as an incentive to get more people to use the hashtag.

## **Key Public 2: Youth Soccer Club til ages 3-17**

- Self-interests:
- Toys, prizes, food
- Fun experiences
- **Primary Message 1:** We saved the best gameday experience for our youth teams.
  - **Secondary Messages:**
    - Youth Nights are back! Kids in the youth club program get to meet the players and ask them questions.
    - Family Night! We will have reduced ticket prices for certain games for families.
    - Kids Night! There will be so many fun giveaways for kids during certain games.
- **Primary Message 2:** Level up your soccer game by practicing with the Rapids' players.
  - **Secondary Messages:**
    - Practice with Players! Select youth teams will get to practice with Rapids' players.
    - Learn from the best! Rapid's players will teach professional drills and coach the youth teams.
    - Get to know the team! Youth teams will have a Q&A session with players after Rapid's game



## Message Delivery:

**Strategy 1:** Entice the youth soccer club ages 3-17 through local digital ads that attending Colorado Rapids games will satisfy their need for a fun experience, games, and free toys.

### Tactics:

- Commercials on local TV channels showing kids practicing with the Rapids' players
- Give flyers to schools to give to the kids to bring home to parents.
- Give flyers to local teams' coaches about Rapids and encourage team bonding nights at a Rapids game.

**Strategy 2:** Motivate the youth teams through TikTok and Snapchat that practicing with the Colorado Rapids will satisfy their need to gain a role model and increase their soccer skills.

### Tactics:

- Create TikTok and Snapchat videos with the winners
- Post videos on both platforms with the players explaining the process of entering/what they will win
- Have the players promote healthy living/making good decisions

## Key Public 3: Denver-area sports media subscribers ages 31 - 55

Self-interests :

- Looking for a team they can be loyal to for years
- Looking for an escape from their jobs/responsibilities
- Want community
- Something to turn on the TV while hosting their friends/ reason to invite friends over
- Able to spend more on tickets
- **Primary Message:** Home is where the Rapids are.
  - **Secondary Messages:**
    - Enter to win raffle tickets! We are going to partner with workplaces to allow ticket packages to be won from a raffle for each game.
    - Spend an evening relaxing! We will have an area reserved for "adults-only" so that parents/adults can ensure a kid-free night if they don't have kids or want a night away from their kids.
    - Home away from home! We want to sponsor an at-home watch party for a Rapids' away game! Enter to win this giveaway with a picture of your at-home watch party for a chance to win.
- **Primary Message:** Bring the family and come on home to Dick's Sporting Goods Field.
  - **Secondary messages:**

- Family night has never been better! For one game, we will offer special ticket packages to families bringing children 17 years old and younger.
- We will randomly select a family to highlight and show on the jumbotron during the game (give them t-shirts to hold up for the jumbotron)
- Kids are randomly selected from the families to compete in on-field games during commercial breaks/before the games start.

**Message Delivery:**

**Strategy 1:** Incentivize Denver-area sports media subscribers ages 31-55 to attend games through Facebook and YouTube campaigns that will increase awareness of the offerings of the Colorado Rapids franchise that will satisfy their desire to have a family-fun activity and invest in a sport.

**Tactics:**

- Use #HomeIsWhereTheRapidsAre as a campaign slogan in all ads
- VIP lounge tickets for families with an all-you-can-eat buffet for an all-inclusive experience
- Create TV ads that are shown on major sports networks (ESPN, SportsCenter, FOX, etc.) along with YouTube, Facebook, and Google.
- Create ads on AppleTV, YouTube, and Facebook that explain the mental health challenge in association with Colorado Rapids' efforts and partnership

**Strategy 2:** Convince the Denver area sports media subscribers ages 31-55 through the game day experience that growing the fan base will satisfy their need for family time and a loyalty rooted in something bigger than themselves.

**Tactics:**

- Use #HomeIsWhereTheRapidsAre when posting a picture from the game to be on the jumbotron.
- Do giveaways during and before the game with team sponsors
- Partner with local workplaces to give companies discounted rates that employees could enter to win tickets to games each week



## Calendar:

Start Date: 2/19/2024	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Weeks	1-2	3-6	7-10	11-14	15-18	19-22	23-27	28-31	32-35
<b>Key Public 1: Denver-area sport media subscribers, ages 18-30</b>									
Strategy 1: Promote these media subscribers through platforms like TikTok and Instagram to create a team loyalty that will carry into their futures.									
Tactic: Interactive posts that require followers to tag friends	X								
Tactic: meet the players giveaway hosted through social media	X	[Red bar]						X	
Strategy 2: Make 'Join the House Party' a popular statement used by this demographic.									
Tactic: get players to use the hashtag on their own posts	X	[Red bar]						X	
Tactic: enter to win free merch by using the hashtag	X		X		X		X		
<b>Key Public 2: Youth soccer club, ages 3-17</b>									
Strategy 1: Entice the youth soccer club ages 3-17 through local digital ads that attending Colorado Rapids games will satisfy their need for a fun experience, games, and free toys.									
Tactic: Commercials on local TV channels showing kids practicing with the Rapids' players	X	[Red bar]						X	
Tactic: Give flyers to scrubs to give to the						∨			
Tactic: Post videos on both platforms with the players explaining the process of entering/what they will win	X								
Tactic: Have the players promote healthy living/making good decisions	X	[Red bar]						X	
<b>Key Public 3: Denver-area sport media subscribers, ages 31-55</b>									
Strategy 1: Incentivize public to attend games through Facebook and Youtube campaigns that will increase awareness of the offerings of the Colorado Rapids franchise that will satisfy their desire to have a family-fun activity and invest in a sport.									
Tactic: Use #HomeIsWhereThePodsAre as a campaign slogan in all ads	X	[Red bar]						X	
Tactic: VIP lounge tickets for families with an all-you-can-eat buffet for an all-inclusive experience	X	[Red bar]						X	
Tactic: Create TV ads that are shown on major sports networks (ESPN, SportsCenter, FOX etc.) along with Youtube, Facebook, and Google.	X	[Red bar]						X	
Tactic: Create ads on AppleTV, Youtube, and Facebook that explain the mental health challenge in association with the	X	[Red bar]						X	

For our budget, we strategically assigned certain tactics more allotted money if we deemed they would be more expensive. Some tactics, like using hashtags and getting players to post, will not cost us anything. Therefore, we gave 0% of our budget to these tactics.

For our calendar, we will launch this campaign during the soccer season. Most of our tactics will extend during the entire season. We want to keep the Rapid's brand at the top of every Coloradan's mind during the season.

## **CONCLUSION**

*The objectives, goals, strategies and tactics involved in formulating this process grants the Colorado Rapids a platform as one of the best soccer teams in the country. Now, thousands of students are playing soccer more than ever before and this allows the Rapids to utilize their future with the collaboration of their youth academy. Fostering the growth of younger generations to grow up with the Rapids promotes a community of developing fan and family loyalty. Remember, home is where the Rapids are.*