



BEYOND THE GAME

ADVANCING LATINO REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSION ACROSS US SPORTS

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**Preston Robert Tisch Institute
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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the significant influence and potential of the Latino demographic across major US sports leagues—NFL, NBA, MLB, WNBA, MLS, and college sports, each of which holds a unique opportunity to better engage and represent this vital community.

With 72 percent of Latino fans belonging to Gen Z or millennial age groups, compared to just 50 percent of the overall US sports audience, this younger, digitally engaged community is set to shape the future of American sports (Nielsen, 2024). This enthusiastic and growing Latino audience presents an exciting opportunity to enhance representation in leadership, coaching, and player roles across these leagues, fully harnessing their energy and impact.

Furthermore, current diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives often overlook the Latino community by grouping them under the broader “people of color” category, which can dilute targeted efforts for inclusion. This project will propose strategies to foster diversity and inclusion through targeted recruitment, mentorship, and inclusive practices.

Drawing on insights from the *TIDES Reports* and *Nielsen’s Game Changer: The Power of Latino Fandom*, this report underscores the importance of a dedicated approach to meaningfully engage Latino sports fans and amplify Latino talent across the industry.



LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the relationship between Latinos and sports in the United States, focusing on participation, representation, and sociocultural impact. Using the *TIDES Reports*, which analyze diversity in the National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), Major League Baseball (MLB), Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), Major League Soccer (MLS), and college sports—but excludes the National Hockey League (NHL)—and Nielsen's *Game Changer* report on Latino fandom, it highlights the role of Latinos as participants and consumers.

The review identifies gaps in Latino representation, particularly in leadership roles, and emphasizes the sociocultural significance of sports in fostering community and opportunity. It aims to provide insights into Latinos' potential in US sports and propose strategies to advance inclusion and equity.



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HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF US LATINOS IN SPORTS

Latinos, the largest minority group in the US with over 65 million people (about 20 percent of the population), include Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and others from Central and South America. Even with this diversity, Latinos have faced systemic stereotypes and barriers, often seen as lacking discipline or leadership potential, which have limited their representation in fields like sports (Stavans, 2020).

Yet, Latino athletes have leveraged sports to defy stereotypes and honor cultural heritage. Esteban Bellán, the first Latino professional baseball player, set an early example in 1871, followed by Vincent “Sandy” Nava, who became a key player in the National League in 1882 and was promoted as a cultural symbol of Latino talent. Decades later, Roberto Clemente’s 1971 World Series moment, when he addressed his family in Spanish on live television, underscored Latino pride amid assimilation challenges. Clemente’s legacy symbolizes resilience and dignity within Latino communities (Burgos, 2017).

Latino athletes have made a lasting impact on major American sports, building pride, identity, and *comunidad*, or community. In baseball, Clemente’s legacy of excellence paved the way for future Latino athletes (Burgos, 2017), while basketball’s rise among US Latino communities through YMCA programs promoted inclusivity (Stavans, 2020). Football gained popularity in Latino regions like California and Texas, with pioneers like Jim Plunkett and Tom Flores challenging stereotypes.

Soccer, central to Latino culture across the world, serves as a unifying symbol. MLS has recognized this connection since 1996, engaging Latino fans as vital to the sport’s growth (Delgado, 1999).

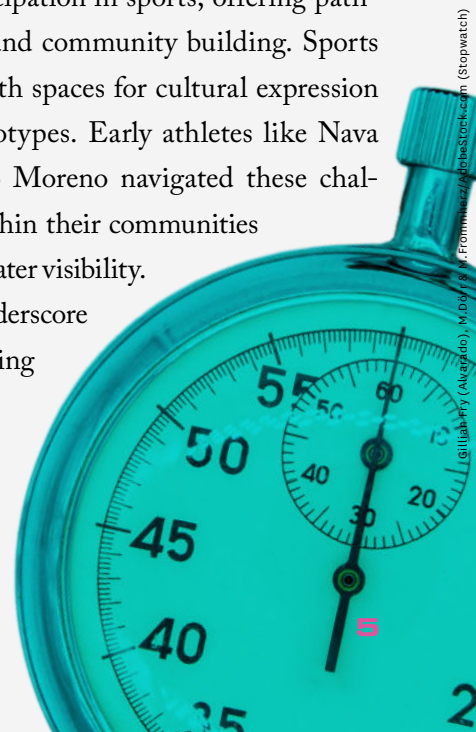
Beyond the field, Latino pioneers in sports leadership—such as Arturo Moreno, Jorge and José Mas, and Linda Alvarado—have shattered barriers, contributing significantly to ownership and executive roles and inspiring future Latino leaders.

Immigration, socioeconomic status, and cultural values have shaped Latino participation in sports, offering pathways for social mobility and community building. Sports have provided Latinos with spaces for cultural expression and helped counter stereotypes. Early athletes like Nava and pioneers like Arturo Moreno navigated these challenges, fostering unity within their communities and paving the way for greater visibility.

Their contributions underscore the importance of promoting inclusivity at all levels in American sports.



Linda Alvarado
Co-Owner, Colorado Rockies



LATINO REPRESENTATION

ACROSS

PROFESSIONAL & COLLEGIATE SPORTS LEAGUES

Latino representation in US sports shows progress on the field but continues to lag in leadership roles, especially in coaching, management, and executive positions.

In MLS and MLB, Latinos are well-represented on the field, with MLS reporting that 32.3 percent of its players identify as Latino, one of the highest proportions in US professional sports (Lapchick et al., 2022). Similarly, MLB's player base includes nearly 30 percent Latinos, reflecting a longstanding connection between the league and Latino communities (Lapchick et al., 2023).

However, this representation dwindles in leadership roles. In MLS, only 21.4 percent of head coaches are Latino, with representation falling further in executive roles—just 8.4 percent of team vice presidents and 7.1 percent of CEO/

president positions are Latino (Lapchick et al., 2022). The MLB shows similar trends; Latinos occupy 19.2 percent of coaching roles and 13.3 percent of managerial roles, marking progress but limited advancement at executive levels (Lapchick et al., 2023). Both the MLB and MLS have only one Latino owner, highlighting significant gaps in ownership diversity within these leagues.

The NBA and WNBA present a similar picture. Both leagues have high diversity grades, yet Latino-specific representation is minimal. In the NBA, where 82.5 percent of players are people of color, only 2.2 percent identify as Latino (Lapchick et al., 2023). The NBA's high diversity grades don't fully address Latino representation in coaching and executive roles. Currently, no Latinos serve as head coaches, and only 2.9 percent of assistant coaches

are Latino. At the executive level, just 3.6 percent of vice presidents or higher positions are held by Latinos, with no Latinos in positions like CEO, president, or general manager (Lapchick et al., 2023).

Similarly, in the WNBA, Latino players make up just 1.4 percent of the league—a slight increase from 0.7 percent in 2022—but no Latinos hold head or assistant coaching positions, and only 5.7 percent of managerial roles are filled by Latinos. The lack of Latino team presidents or general managers for over a decade has led the WNBA to earn a C- in racial hiring for top-level positions (Bouchet et al., 2023).

NFL and NCAA sports further underscore the disparities in Latino leadership. In the NFL, Latinos represent just 0.5 percent of players, with

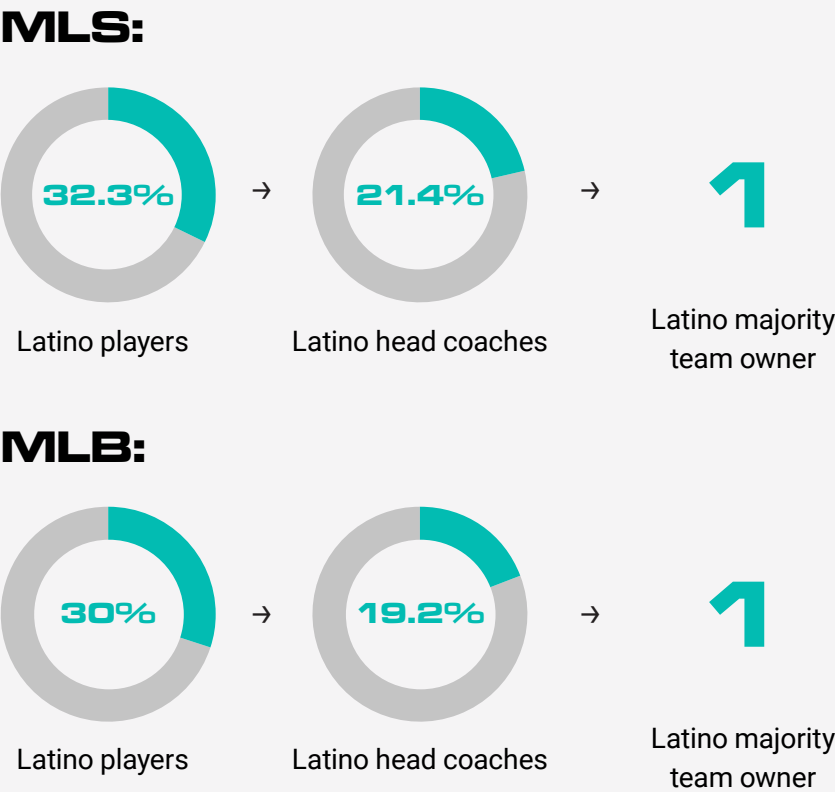
only 3.7 percent of vice presidents and 5.4 percent of senior administrators identifying as Latino. The league has one Latino team owner, and Latinos remain largely absent from coaching and executive roles, mirroring gaps seen in the NBA (Bouchet et al., 2023).

In college sports, particularly within the NCAA, Latino representation is even more limited. Only 2.8 percent of Division I athletic directors are Latino, decreasing to 1.4 percent in Division III, and Latino presence in the NCAA National Office has recently declined to 2.2 percent (Lapchick et al., 2022).

Among student-athletes, Latino representation is limited across most sports, with exceptions in baseball and softball. However, soccer—arguably one of the most culturally significant sports for Latino communities—is notably absent from NCAA diversity reports, representing a missed opportunity to support Latino student-athletes and strengthen ties with Latino communities. (Lapchick et al., 2022)

While diversity initiatives have improved general representation for people of color, they often overlook Latino-specific barriers in advancing to executive roles.

Chart 1: Dwindling Representation in MLS and MLB



23% Latino hires in 2021-2022 from the MLB’s Diversity Pipeline Program

**“MANY STRUGGLE
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AS ADEQUATE FACILITIES,
EQUIPMENT, COACHES,
AND MENTORS.”**

DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

IN

SPORTS LEAGUES AND COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

To address disparities in Latino representation, major leagues and collegiate sports organizations have launched several diversity initiatives aimed at fostering greater inclusion. An example of this includes the MLB and NFL supporting career development efforts for Latinos such as the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI). The 2023 CHCI conference provides Latino students with networking and leadership opportunities (Lapchick et al., 2023). While this initiative is important, it is not an ongoing program for Latino professionals within these leagues.

A better integrated program would be the **NFL's LIGA coalition** which serves to promote Latino staff engage-

ment and professional development (Bouchet et al., 2023). Additionally, **Somos MLS** is an initiative designed to recognize, celebrate, and share the rich culture, heritage, and language of Latino professionals within Major League Soccer (Lapchick, 2022).

Similarly, MLB's **All-Star DEI activations** have effectively highlighted the cultural impact of Latino players, but these efforts tend to focus more on celebration rather than directly fostering career development or creating advancement opportunities for Latinos within the league. Furthermore, MLS' early outreach efforts included initiatives like Hispanic Heritage Nights and Spanish-language media partnerships, showing efforts in engaging the

Latino community (Lapchick, 2022). However, MLS's initial emphasis on Mexican culture, though resonant for Mexican American fans, sometimes unintentionally alienated other Latino groups (Delgado, 1999).

While these initiatives are aimed at providing opportunities and celebrating Latino culture, they are not implemented internally in these leagues. It is also crucial to develop some of these more centralized programs, to welcome individuals from all Latino backgrounds.

Collegiate sports and professional leagues like the MLB and the MLS have implemented broad DEI initiatives, such as the **NCAA's Eight-Point Plan**, the **MLS Board of Governors**

DEI Committee and **MLB's Diversity Pipeline Program**, which offer valuable support for underrepresented minorities. Additionally, the **MLB's Breakthrough Series**, **DREAM Series**, and the **WNBA's Juneteenth** and **She's Invested** programs provide important opportunities.

Similarly, the **NFL's \$250 million Inspire Change program**, focuses on combating systemic racism and supporting community organizations (Bouchet et al., 2023). These efforts are notable as they uplift people of color and provide support for success.

However, they often focus primarily on Black and African American communities, overlooking the unique needs of the Latino population. The

MLB's Diversity Pipeline Program saw 23 percent Latino hires in 2021-2022 (Lapchick et al., 2023), and the WNBA has made strides with financial mentorship for women of color (Bouchet et al., 2023). These initiatives, while positive, highlight the gap between program intentions and measurable progress in high-level roles.

Conversely, leagues like MLS and the NBA have been more successful in creating these targeted initiatives for the Latino community. MLS, for example, runs programs like **Capitanes del Futuro**, a partnership with Procter & Gamble and Hispanic Star that offers Hispanic youth mentorship, exclusive experiences, and exposure to Latino leaders.

Another initiative, **Every Save Makes a Difference**, in collaboration with Univision and Allstate, donates soccer equipment to underserved Hispanic communities for every save by an MLS goalkeeper during TelevisaUnivision Deportes Network broadcasts, while also providing clinics to promote healthy, active lifestyles (Lapchick, 2022).

Similarly, the NBA has hosted numerous community engagement events, such as basketball camps and clinics for Latino youth in South Texas, incorporating local culture and language to connect with the community. These efforts reflect the leagues' success in creating programs specifically targeted at the Latino community.



CULTURAL IMPACT OF SOCIOECONOMIC BARRIERS

Our research examines how Latino culture intersects with systemic inequality and inequity, focusing on the structural disparities that impact opportunities for Latinos. Many struggle to access elite athletic programs because of financial limitations or lack of resources in their communities. These underserved areas, often low-income households, are frequently lacking in essential infrastructure, such as adequate facilities, equipment, coaches, and mentors. Additionally, language barriers can prevent effective communication and teamwork, further limiting success (Iber, 2020).

In many families, expectations placed greater responsibility on familial duties than a formal education. Men were expected to work and provide financial support, while women were primarily responsible for household chores and caring for younger siblings (Selber, 2020). These norms left little time for education, learning the language, or participating in sports. As a result, many Latinos were unable to finish high school or pursue higher education. For first-generation Latinos, obtaining a degree can shift these expectations within the family as education becomes a key to breaking generational cycles.

According to TIDES, Latinos are expected to excel in certain “traditional” sports, such as soccer and baseball, with more cultural visibility in leagues like the

MLS and MLB. However, they tend to be overlooked in other major sports leagues as seen in the NFL, NBA, and the WNBA, as well as college sports. The TIDES reports highlight both the initiatives aimed at improving Latino representation and the challenges that persist in diversifying participation beyond traditional culture.

Looking at systemic inequality from an economic perspective, the limited access to quality programs directly impacts Latino athletes’ ability to reach their full potential and contributes to a cycle of underrepresentation in professional sports. The Nielsen report suggests that, by addressing these inequalities, the

untapped potential to engage Latino audiences would provide substantial economic benefits for both the sports industry and the Latino community.

An inequitable sports system and the effects of institutionalized racism often contribute to racial biases in recruitment and lack of representation in media, reinforcing disparities and causing Latino athletes to be overlooked, despite their talent and potential (Iber, 2018).

Latinas often face intersectional discrimination, navigating both gender and racial biases within male dominated sports systems. The TIDES reports on collegiate sports highlight the challenges of gender and its disproportionate impact on Latina athletes, who face significant barriers in terms of visibility, investment, and support. Literature suggests by promoting gender equity and fostering role models and mentors, Latinas can have the same opportunities to succeed as their male counterparts (Iber & Regalado, 2007).

“Many Latinos take pride in their heritage and actively reject the pressure to Americanize, which further highlights the disconnect between the desire for social acceptance and the importance of preserving the culture.”

Within cultural pride and fandom, research suggests that athletes and fans often face pressures related to cultural assimilation, including the Americanization of names and identities. The process of modifying names to establish a norm based on societal expectations and the desire for greater acceptance can be

seen as a form of cultural erasure. However, many Latinos take pride in their heritage and actively reject the pressure to Americanize, which further highlights the disconnect between the desire for social acceptance and the importance of preserving the culture (Iber et al., 2011).

**“IMMIGRATION,
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS,
AND CULTURAL VALUES
HAVE SHAPED LATINO
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SOCIAL MOBILITY AND
COMMUNITY BUILDING.
SPORTS HAVE PROVIDED
LATINOS WITH SPACES FOR
CULTURAL EXPRESSION
AND HELPED COUNTER
STEREOTYPES.”**

RESEARCH GAPS

While sports empower the Latino community, there is a crucial need to boost Latino representation in decision-making roles. Addressing access barriers and fostering leadership pathways will create a more inclusive sports landscape that truly reflects and serves diverse communities.

However, achieving this inclusivity requires addressing specific five gaps identified in our literature review.

- 1 Underreporting of Latino representation:** TIDES groups Latinos under POC, masking specific data. Disaggregated metrics could better support targeted inclusion.
- 2 Intention versus progress in high-level roles:** Diversity programs lack measurable outcomes for Latino advancement in leadership, highlighting the need for targeted hiring.
- 3 Intersectional discrimination against Latinas:** Research neglects the gender and cultural biases Latinas face in sports, underscoring the need for inclusive policies.
- 4 Absence of NHL TIDES report:** Exclusion of hockey in diversity analyses highlights the urgent need for intersectional change in inclusivity and opportunity.
- 5 Exclusion of soccer in TIDES reports:** TIDES omits soccer in college assessments, missing an area key to Latino representation.

“Latino athletes have made a lasting impact on major American sports, building pride, identity, and **comunidad**, or community.”

RETURN ON OBJECTIVES

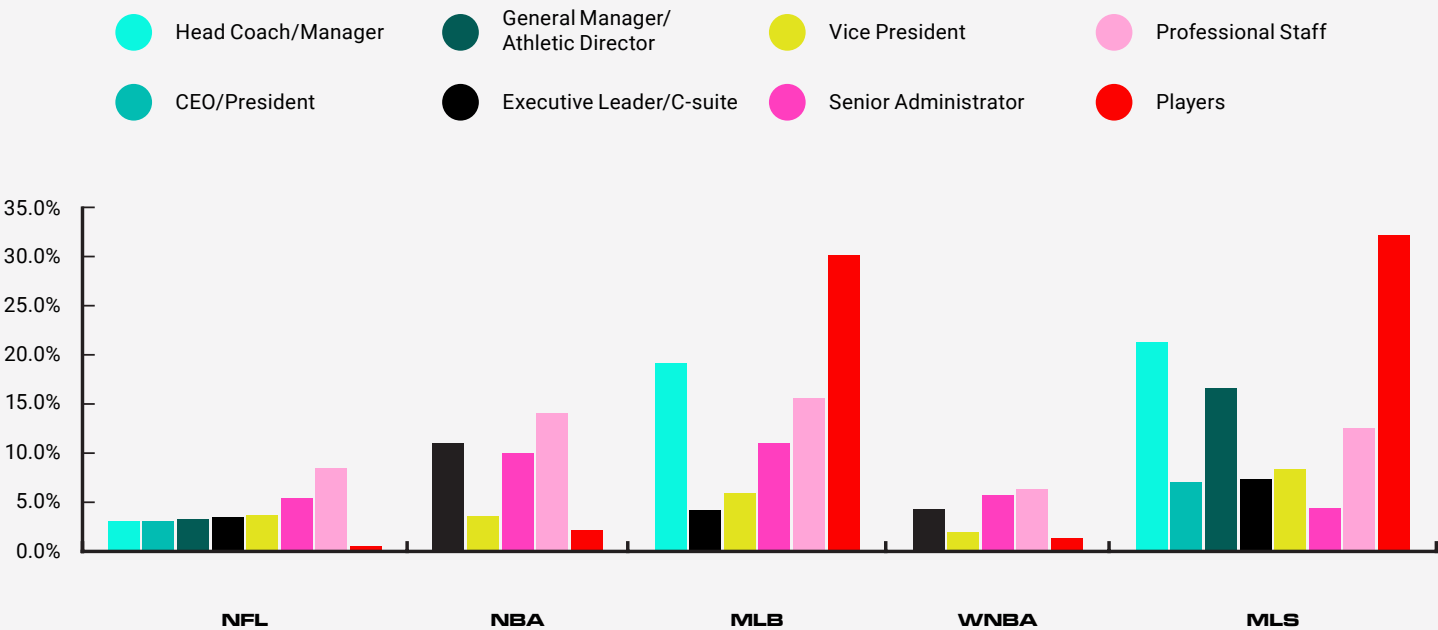
The measurement section of this report defines key metrics to evaluate our impact, focusing on return on objective (ROO). The global ROO is to achieve a **25 percent cumulative increase in Latino representation in higher administration positions by 2030**, capitalizing on the significant growth potential of Latino fandom for US sports leagues (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Metrics such as promotions, leadership pipeline, and employee pipeline diversity will help track progress, ensuring our initiatives drive meaningful, long-term change in the industry by enhancing Latino representation and engagement (Jourdan, 2023).



Many of the leagues’ programs, initiatives, and financial commitments are positioned as progressive steps toward diversity and inclusion. However, these efforts lack measurable data to validate their effectiveness in creating equitable outcomes. While they appear promising in principle, the absence of quantifiable data makes it challenging to accurately assess their true impact. As a result, Latino representation remains disproportionately low on the field and in leadership roles. To address this, institutions must implement targeted strategies with measurable benchmarks and data tracking to ensure meaningful progress.

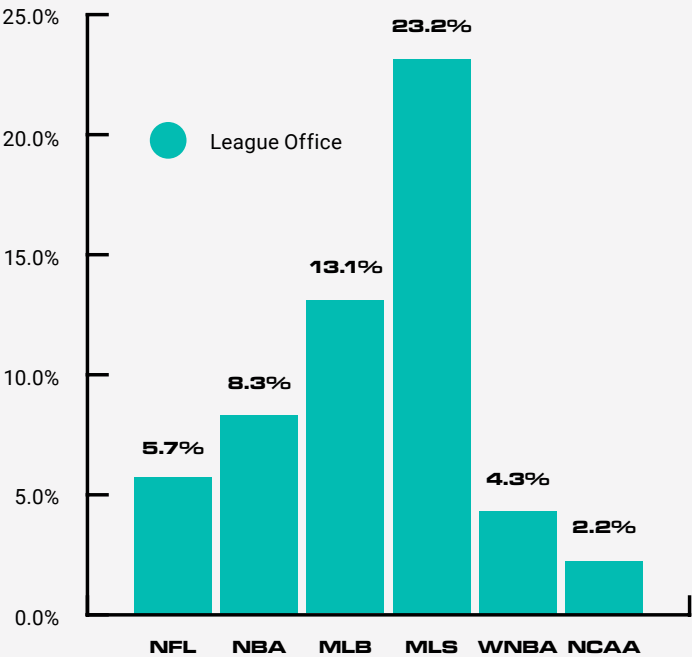
This section leverages data from the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR) 2024 Corporate Inclusion Index to establish benchmark percent increase goals for Latino representation across promotions, leadership pipelines, and employee pipelines.

Figure 1: Latino Representation in US Sports Leagues



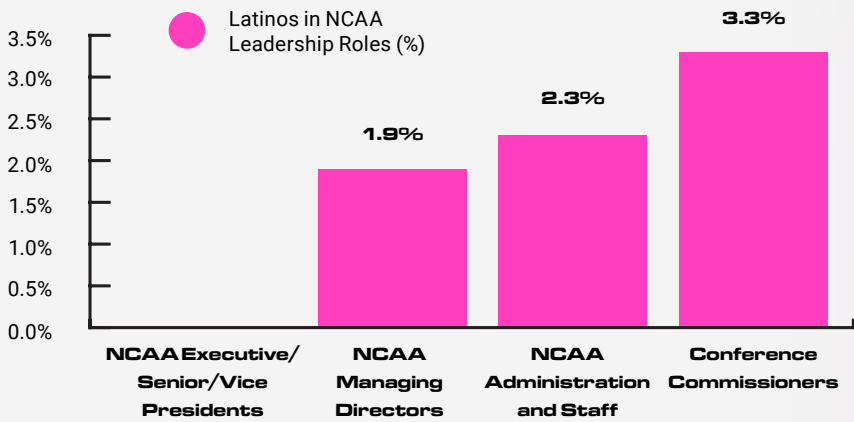
Numbers reflect most recent TIDES Reports as of December 2024.
Note: Overall Grade. League Office numbers not included.

Figure 2: Latino Representation in League Offices



Numbers reflect most recent TIDES Reports as of December 2024.

Figure 3: Latino Representation in NCAA Leadership

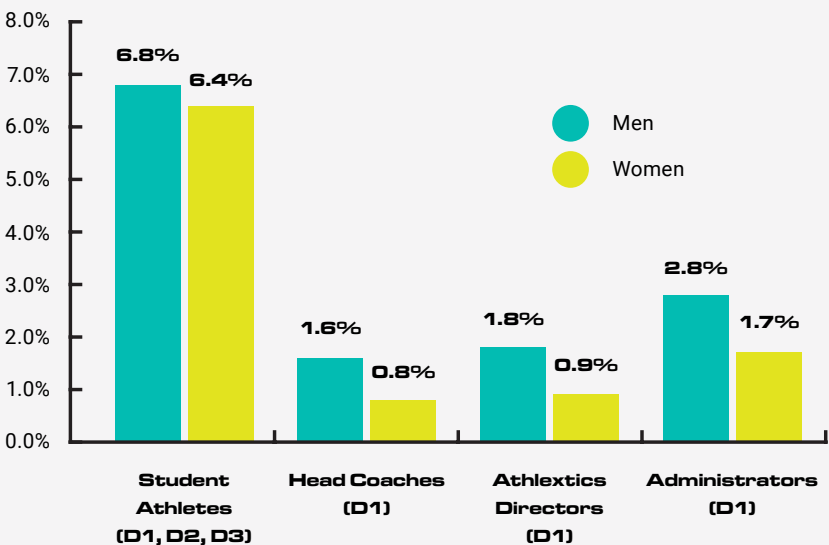


Numbers reflect most recent TIDES Reports as of December 2024.

Incorporating specific, measurable goals ensures the project’s objectives are tracked and met across the five leagues and college sports. Key metrics, adapted from industry best practices in DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) measurement, provide a solid framework to evaluate progress and will be outlined as follows for each:

- **Promotions:** Measure promotion rates for Latinos in sports roles to determine whether equitable advancement opportunities are being provided. (Jourdan, 2023)
- **Leadership Pipeline:** Assess the diversity of future leadership candidates in sports roles, ensuring representation aligns with overall workforce demographics. (Jourdan, 2023)
- **Employee Pipeline:** Track diversity throughout the hiring process—from applications to final hiring decisions—to promote fair representation across the recruitment pipeline. (Jourdan, 2023)

Figure 4: Latino representation in the NCAA by gender



Numbers reflect most recent TIDES Reports as of December 2024.
Note: Based on genders reported in TIDES and not intended to exclude other identities.

NFL

Promotions

Objective:

Create clear pathways and establish specific criteria for advancing Latino employees into high-visibility roles and provide measurable development opportunities with clearly defined outcomes aimed at increasing Latino representation by 10-15 percent over the next five years.

Measurement:

- **Promotion Rate:** Track the percentage of Latino employees promoted annually across various levels, with a focus on achieving a 10-15 percent increase in senior roles over the next five years.
- **Career Advancement:** Assess the current delays in the progression of Latino employees from entry-level to mid- and senior-level roles, with a goal to reduce this time by 10-15 percent by 2030 through focused interventions and support to address existing barriers to advancement.
- **Effectiveness of DEI Programs:** Evaluate the effectiveness of specific DEI initiatives in accelerating the promotion rate of Latino employees and address barriers identified in evaluation.
- **Post-Promotion Retention Rate:** Track retention rate of Latino employees post-promotion with a yearly growth rate of 2 percent, to assess sustainability, considering the impact of intersectionality.

Leadership Pipeline

Objective:

Rigorously enforce the Rooney Rule to ensure that qualified Latino candidates are actively and genuinely considered for, and hired to, all coaching and senior leadership positions, leveraging the Hiring Best Practices Guide.

Measurement:

- **Leadership Role Placements:** Measure and track the number of Latino candidates who secure coaching and leadership roles within five years, targeting a 10-15 percent placement rate to increase Latino representation.
- **Retention Rate:** Track the retention rate of Latino coaches and leadership hired through Rooney Rule compliance, with a goal of a 2 percent yearly increase.
- **Effectiveness of Enforcement:** Measure effectiveness of implementing the Hiring Best Practices Guide and process improvements, with strict accountability for adherence to the Rooney Rule.

Employment Pipeline

Objective:

Develop an entry-level employment pipeline for Latinos by strengthening partnerships with Latino-focused organizations and educational institutions, while creating targeted programs to increase Latino representation and new-hire growth by 10-15 percent over the next five years.

Measurement:

- **Diversity of New Hires:** Track the percentage of Latino employees among new hires annually.
- **Initiative Programs:** Strict monitoring of participation rates and retention of Latino talent in these initiatives, with program accountability for measurable outcomes, with a target of 10-15 percent increase by 2030.
- **Conversion Rate:** Measure the percentage of Latino participants who transition to full-time positions within the NFL from these initiatives, aiming to hire at least 2 percent yearly increase of new employees through these programs over the next five years.

NBA

Promotions

Objective:

Establish clear pathways for 10-15 percent Latino employee advancement ensuring opportunities for progression into high-impact leadership roles.

Measurement:

- **Promotion Rate:** Track the promotion rates of Latino employees annually. Set a target to increase Latino promotions by at least by 2 percent annually over the next five years.
- **Career Advancement:** Measure the time taken for Latino employees to advance from entry- to mid- and senior-level roles, aiming to reduce progression time by 10-15 percent by 2030.
- **Effectiveness of DEI Programs:** Evaluate the effectiveness of current initiatives outlined in the TIDES report, and address the barriers identified during the evaluation.

Leadership Pipeline

Objective:

Establish a structured Leadership Pipeline Program that integrates with ongoing initiatives, inclusion programming, and professional development and aims at increasing Latino representation in coaching and leadership roles by 10-15 percent over the next five years.

Measurement:

- **Leadership Development Program Enrollment:** Measure the year-to-year increase of Latino employees in leadership development and training programs, with a goal of 2 percent.
- **Retention Rate:** Track the retention rate of Latino coaches, leaders, and employees participating in leadership development programs, ensuring a 2 percent yearly increase while initiatives are actively implemented.
- **Latino Representation in Leadership Roles:** Measure the percentage of Latino employees in senior leadership and coaching positions, targeting a 10-15 percent increase over the next five years.

Employment Pipeline

Objective:

Develop entry-level employment pipeline for Latinos by enhancing partnerships with Latino-focused organizations, educational systems, and creating targeted programs to increase Latino representation in new hires, with a goal of 10-15 percent growth by 2030.

Measurement:

- **Diversity of New Hires:** Track the percentage of Latino employees among new hires annually, setting an annual benchmark that improves 2 percent year over year.
- **Initiative Programs:** Monitor the participation and retention of Latino talent within the employment pipeline, ensuring these initiatives contribute to measurable outcomes, with the goal of hiring a 10-15 percent increase of new employees through these programs within five years.
- **Conversion Rate:** Measure the percentage of Latino participants from these initiatives who successfully convert to full-time positions within the NBA annually, aiming for a 2 percent yearly increase.

MLB

Promotions

Objective:

Establish clear pathways and criteria for promoting employees within MLB, ensuring opportunities for upward mobility into senior administration, management, and executive roles with a 15-20 percent increase of Latinos in the next five years.

Measurement:

- **Promotion Rate:** Track the percentage of Latino employees promoted annually across various levels.
- **Career Advancement:** Measure the time taken for Latino employees to advance from entry-level to mid- and senior-level roles, aiming to reduce progression time by 10 percent by 2030.
- **Post-Promotion Retention Rate:** Evaluate the current retention rate of Latino employees post promotion, with a goal of 2-4 percent yearly increase.
- **Executive Mentors/Sponsors:** Pair Latino employees that are on track for promotion with senior mentors/sponsors to advocate for their career progression and provide guidance.

Leadership Pipeline

Objective:

Create a structured Leadership Development Program to prepare Latino employees for management and executive roles, increasing Latino leadership by 15-20 percent by 2030.

Measurement:

- **Leadership Development Program Enrollment:** Measure the number of Latino employees participating in leadership development and training programs, aiming for at least 15-20 percent of Latino employees to be actively enrolled in such initiatives within five years.
- **Retention Rate:** Evaluate the current retention rate of Latino employees who participate in leadership development programs, with a goal of 2-4 percent growth each year.

Employment Pipeline

Objective:

Strengthen the entry-level employment pipeline for Latinos by aiming to hire at least 25-35 percent of new employees from initiatives such as the Diversity Pipeline Program and MLB Diversity fellowship.

Measurement:

- **Diversity of New Hires:** Track the percentage of Latino employees among new hires annually.
- **Initiative Programs:** Monitor participation rates and retention for Latino participants in these initiatives.
- **Conversion Rate:** Measure the percentage of Latinos who convert to full-time positions within the MLB from these initiatives.

WNBA

Promotions

Objective:

Create pathways for the promotion of 10-15 percent of Latino employees into leadership and high-impact roles within five years.

Measurement:

- **Promotion Rate:** Track the percentage of Latino employees who are promoted within the WNBA annually. Set a target for promotion rates of Latino employees, aiming for a minimum of 10-15 percent increase in Latino promotions over the next five years.
- **Career Advancement:** Measure the time taken for Latino employees to advance from entry-level to mid- and senior-level roles, aiming to reduce progression time by 10-15 percent by 2030.
- **Post-Promotion Retention Rate:** Evaluate the current retention rate of Latino employees post promotion, with a yearly 2 percent growth rate.

Leadership Pipeline

Objective:

Develop a structured Leadership Pipeline Program to prepare Latino employees for senior leadership roles, increasing their representation in managerial and team president roles by 10-15 percent within five years.

Measurement:

- **Leadership Development Program Enrollment:** Measure the number of Latino employees participating in leadership development and training programs, aiming for at least 10-15 percent of Latino employees to be actively enrolled in such initiatives within five years.
- **Retention Rate:** Evaluate the retention rate of Latino employees who participate in leadership development programs, with a goal of 2 percent yearly increase.
- **Latino Representation in Leadership Roles:** Track the percentage of Latino employees in senior leadership positions (e.g., executive vice presidents, senior directors, coaches, general managers) across the league, with a goal of increasing Latino representation by 10-15 percent over the next five years.

Employment Pipeline

Objective:

Strengthen the employment pipeline to increase Latino representation, with a target of 10-15 percent Latino hires in entry-level roles by 2030.

Measurement:

- **Diversity of New Hires:** Track the percentage of Latino employees among new hires annually.
- **Entry-Level Program Conversion:** Track the rate at which Latino entry-level employees transition to higher up roles, with a target of 10-15 percent increase by 2030.
- **Early Career Retention:** Evaluate the current retention rate of Latino junior staff, aiming for a 2 percent yearly increase.

MLS

Promotions

Objective:

Establish clear pathways and criteria for promoting Latino employees within MLS, ensuring opportunities for upward mobility into senior administration, management, and executive roles by increasing promotion rates by 5-10 percent annually over the next five years.

Measurement:

- **Promotion Rate:** Increase the annual percentage of Latino employees promoted by 5-10 percent per year over the next five years.
- **Post-Promotion Retention Rate:** Establish a benchmark in the first year by tracking the percentage of Latino employees retained post-promotion. Use this benchmark as a baseline and aim for a 2 percent year-over-year increase over the next five years.

Leadership Pipeline

Objective:

Create a structured Leadership Development Program to prepare Latino employees for management and executive roles, aiming to increase Latino leadership representation by 15 percent over the next five years.

Measurement:

- **Program Enrollment:** Increase the percentage of Latino participants in the Leadership Development Program by 6-8 percent annually, targeting 30-35 percent Latino representation in the program by year five.
- **Program Completion Rate:** Track the percentage of Latino participants who complete the program and improve rates over five years to strengthen the pipeline for executive roles in MLS.
- **Leadership Role Placement:** Use the percentage of Latino program graduates placed in leadership roles in the first year as the baseline. Target a 30 percent placement rate within five years.

Employment Pipeline

Objective:

Strengthen the entry-level employment pipeline for Latinos by hiring at least 30 percent of new employees from MLS diversity initiatives by 2030.

Measurement:

- **Diversity of New Hires:** Increase Latino representation among new hires by 5-6 percent annually, targeting 30 percent Latino representation in new hires by 2030.
- **Initiative Participation:** Increase participation rates of Latino candidates in MLS diversity programs by 5-10 percent annually, ensuring 30-40 percent of program participants are Latino by year five.
- **Conversion Rate:** Improve the conversion rate of Latino candidates from diversity initiatives to full-time positions by 6-8 percent annually, reaching a 30-35 percent conversion rate by year five.

COLLEGE SPORTS

Promotions

Objective:

Establish clear pathways and criteria for promoting Latino staff in college sports, ensuring equitable opportunities for advancement into senior administration, coaching, and executive roles by increasing annual promotion rates by 3-5 percent per year, achieving a 15-25 percent cumulative increase by 2030.

Measurement:

- **Promotion Rate:** Increase annual promotion rates for Latino staff by 4-5 percent per year, achieving a 20-25 percent total increase by 2030.
- **Post-Promotion Retention Rate:** Establish a benchmark in the first year by tracking the percentage of Latino employees retained post-promotion. Use this benchmark as a baseline and aim for a 2 percent year-over-year increase over the next five years.

Leadership Pipeline

Objective:

Develop a structured Leadership Development Program to prepare Latino staff for managerial and executive roles, aiming to increase Latino leadership representation by 5-10 percent within the next five years.

Measurement:

- **Program Enrollment:** Increase the percentage of Latinos among Leadership Development Program participants by 3-5 percent annually, aiming for 15-20 percent Latino representation in the program by 2030.
- **Program Completion Rate:** Track the percentage of Latino participants who complete the program and improve rates over five years to strengthen the pipeline for executive roles in college sports.
- **Leadership Role Placement:** Use the percentage of Latino program graduates placed in leadership roles in the first year as the baseline. Target a 10-15 percent placement rate within five years.

Employment Pipeline

Objective:

Strengthen the entry-level employment pipeline for Latinos in college sports by aiming to hire at least 10-15 percent of new employees from diversity-focused initiatives within the next five years.

Measurement:

- **Diversity of New Hires:** Increase the percentage of Latino employees among new hires by 3-4 percent annually, reaching 15-20 percent Latino representation by 2030.
- **Initiative Participation:** Increase Latino participation in diversity-focused hiring initiatives by 4-6 percent annually, ensuring 20-25 percent of participants in these initiatives are Latino by 2030.
- **Conversion Rate:** Improve the conversion rate of Latino candidates from diversity initiatives to full-time positions by 2-3 percent annually, reaching a 10-15 percent conversion rate by year five.

VALUE PROPOSITION: ENHANCING LATINO REPRESENTATION

As a graduate research team at New York University's Preston Robert Tisch Institute for Global Sport, our mission is to provide actionable insights that drive meaningful change across industries, with a particular focus on sports and diversity. We seek to bring attention to underrepresented communities, such as Latinos, and their immense impact on sports culture and business. By combining comprehensive market research with sociocultural trends, we explore the unique characteristics of Latino sports fans and athletes, providing organizations with the knowledge necessary to build more inclusive and impactful strategies.

In this context, we emphasize the importance of racial equity and inclusion to integrate more diverse voices who offer the potential for not only deeper cultural connections but also new business opportunities. Our findings are essential for organizations seeking to effectively engage with Latino communities and contribute to a more equitable sports environment.

Based on our research, we have proposed targeted initiatives for each league—NFL, NBA, MLB, WNBA, MLS, and College Sports—that aim to enhance Latino representation both in and out of the game. Each initiative focuses on inclusive hiring practices and grassroots engagement strategies tailored to the unique opportunities and challenges within each league.



NFL

Latinos are becoming an increasingly influential demographic in the NFL, with over 15.4 million expressing strong interest in the sport. Among them, 67 percent belong to Gen Z or millennials, compared to the general sports fanbase (Nielsen, 2024), reflecting the youth and passion driving this growing audience.

Despite these findings, Latinos remain underrepresented in leadership and talent pipelines within the NFL. This disparity reflects a gap between the league's diversity goals and the reality of its workforce. Embracing Latino representation will deepen engagement, drive growth, and ensure the NFL remains culturally relevant in a rapidly diversifying sports marketplace.

By prioritizing regions with large Latino populations and investing in talent development, the NFL can better align with the evolving demographics of the fanbase, fostering innovation and long-term success.

Initiative: The Tom Flores Framework

The Tom Flores Framework targets the Southwest regions, with a particular focus on Texas and California, where Latino populations, especially Mexican Americans, are integral to the local communities and the region's rich football culture. With the largest Latino group of over 38 million Mexican Americans

in the US (Statista, n.d.), the NFL has a unique opportunity to foster deeper connections by addressing the underrepresentation of Latinos across various levels of the league.

The shift toward greater Latino representation in sports requires initiatives similar to those aimed at increasing diversity for other people of color, such as the Rooney Rule, partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and programs like Inspire Change.

The inclusion of Tom Flores, the first Mexican American head coach to win the Super Bowl, exemplifies the potential for growth and representation. Flores has devoted his career to helping Latinos in his region of California. By focusing on these key areas—particularly in supporting Latino student-athletes in underserved communities—the NFL can bridge access gaps and create a more inclusive league. This framework aims to empower Latino communities, creating career pathways in sports and promoting cultural diversity.

15.4 MILLION

Latinos express strong interest in
American football and the NFL

(Source: Nielsen, 2024)

The following targeted strategies outline how the Tom Flores Framework will achieve these goals:

Inclusive Hiring Practices

Increased Accountability and Transparency:

- Set framework specific to Latinos, requiring detailed feedback on hiring processes, including an explanation of why a minority candidate was not selected.
- Introduce incentives to encourage teams to comply and demonstrate tangible progress by conducting regular reporting, independent audits, and data sharing to track and evaluate outcomes.

Expanding the Scope:

- Broaden the framework reach to include roles like general managers, coordinators, and other decision-making leadership positions will ensure a more comprehensive approach to diversity within the NFL.
- Mandate minority interviews for leadership and other key decision-making roles to ensure that Latino talent is being actively considered and promoted.

Grassroots Initiatives

Southwest Specific Engagement:

In partnership with the NFL's Inspire Change initiative, focus on providing financial support for coaches, as well as lessons and opportunities for Latino youth in the region with events like local All-Star Football Games.

Education Partnerships:

Collaborate with Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Southwest regional colleges and universities to create partnerships and programs to focus on addressing financial challenges, creating direct pipelines from education to entry-level and leadership roles in the NFL and broader sports industry.



NBA

In the NBA, grassroots initiatives are essential for cultivating strong connections with Latino communities, where basketball holds significant cultural importance. Nielsen (2024) data shows that 72 percent of Latino NBA fans are Gen Z and millennials, compared to 58 percent of the general population in the same age group. This highlights the vast potential for the NBA to engage with and empower Latino youth, ensuring the league remains both culturally relevant and inclusive for future generations.

Initiative: NBA Culture

NBA Culture seeks to leverage the rapid growth of English-dominant Latino fandom, which marks a shift from language to culture as the driving force behind Latino engagement in sports. Basketball culture, particularly within the NBA, has a unique influence in Latino communities, blending passion, identity, and opportunity. Trends indicate that English-dominant Latino fans are increasingly involved, signaling an evolving fandom that cannot be overlooked.

By embracing Latino culture, the NBA can create avenues for greater representation across all levels—on the court, in league offices, and in leadership roles. Through educational pathways, grassroots programs, and community partner-

ships, the NBA can identify top talent in underserved areas and bridge gaps in access to opportunities.

Prioritizing Latino culture in hiring practices reflects the NBA's diverse fanbase and fosters innovation, growth, and stronger community ties. This approach builds trust within Latino communities, ensuring cultural understanding is embedded in decision-making and driving both equity and organizational success.

72%

of Latino NBA
fans are Gen Z
and millennials

(Source: Nielsen, 2024)

The following targeted strategies outline how NBA Culture will achieve these goals:

Inclusive Hiring Practices

Cultural Equity Collaborations:

Partner with Latino-focused organizations like Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR) and LiS™: Latinos in Sports to ensure hiring practices are culturally inclusive, reflect the demographics of their fanbases, and foster a pipeline for long-term leadership roles.

Leverage Hispanic Serving Institutions:

- Collaborate with Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) to develop targeted recruitment, internship, and scholarship programs that create direct pathways for students into the sports industry.
- Address financial barriers often faced by Latino students and ensure equitable access to careers in sports.

Access to Opportunities:

Provide exposure to recruiters and educational pathways, fostering talent in regions with high Latino populations for students to enter the NBA and sports industry, with a focus on careers in management, coaching, media, and beyond.

Grassroots Initiatives

Targeted Community Engagement:

Partner with colleges and universities to offer free basketball camps, clinics, and tournaments in underserved Latino communities outside of typical major cities.

Empowering Latino Youth:

Collaborate with local Boys & Girls Clubs and YWCAs to bridge the gaps in sports development and create more opportunities for Latino youth of all genders to advance in basketball, both academically and athletically.



MLB

In MLB, Latino representation in professional roles is essential for fostering inclusivity and aligning with the demographics of the sport's passionate fan base. With 42 percent of MLB's passionate fans identifying as Latino compared to the general population (Nielsen, 2024), the league has a unique opportunity to strengthen its connection with this vital segment.

MLB has already taken steps to increase diversity by implementing initiatives that create opportunities for people of color. This foundation provides a platform for more specific strategies targeting Latino representation.

Initiative: Latino Talent Empowerment

MLB's robust infrastructure and history of innovation position it to lead the way in ensuring that Latinos have equitable opportunities across all departments of the league. These efforts would set a standard for the sports industry, reflecting the values of diversity and social responsibility.

Through the Latino Talent Empowerment initiative, Latino candidates will be targeted in recruitment for roles within MLB by leveraging organizations and platforms that serve the Latino community. The program will empower Latinos through community events, career panels, and educational partnerships to provide opportunities for Latino students pursuing careers in sports.

42%
of MLB's
passionate
fans are Latino

(Source: Nielsen, 2024)

The following targeted strategies outline how Latino Talent Empowerment will achieve these goals:

Inclusive Hiring Practices

Targeted Recruitment:

Collaborate with groups like the Hispanic Heritage Foundation or Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility to recruit Latino talent for various roles.

Leverage Job Boards:

Advertise job openings and MLB's initiatives on job boards such as HLPAs (Hispanic/Latino Professionals Association) or Indeed/LinkedIn with relevant keywords to target Latino candidates.

Grassroots Initiatives

Community Engagement:

Organize annual events celebrating Latino contributions to baseball history featuring games, cultural activities, and career panels.

Education Partnerships:

Collaborate with schools and universities with predominantly Latino populations to offer internships, scholarships, and educational programs that encourage Latino students to pursue careers in sports.



WNBA

The representation of Latinos in leadership, management, and entry-level roles within the WNBA is critical for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within the league. Latino fans already constitute 26 percent of passionate WNBA supporters compared to the general population, indicating a strong connection with the league (Nielsen, 2024). By increasing Latino representation, the WNBA can better reflect its fan base demographics and enhance community relationships while fostering innovative thinking.

Currently, the WNBA has successfully integrated women of color into the league by emphasizing the importance of women's health and providing proper resources. They have a framework to expand these initiatives toward Latino representation, implementing targeted strategies to attract and promote Latinos within the organizational structure.

With its existing commitment to social responsibility and community efforts, the WNBA is well-positioned to champion transformative change, becoming a leader in equitable representation.

Initiative: Latinos Connected

The Latinos Connected initiative aims to foster the development of Latinos within the WNBA by enhancing the partnership between WNBA Change-

maker and VIS (Voice in Sport). This collaboration directly engages their mentorship program for Latinos by supporting the goals of inclusive hiring as well as recruiting from colleges with a high Latino population.

To further involve the Latino community, providing youth basketball clinics in these neighborhoods and visiting schools with WNBA ambassadors will promote the league and highlight opportunities for Latinos who aspire to pursue careers in sports.

26%

of WNBA fans
are Latino

(Source: Nielsen, 2024)

The following targeted strategies outline how Latinos Connected will achieve these goals:

Inclusive Hiring Practices

Targeted Recruitment:

Recruit from colleges with significant Latino populations for internships and entry-level roles.

Leverage WNBA Changemaker and VIS Platform:

Expand mentoring sessions for Latinos by involving VIS Latino Mentors or WNBA Latino players. This will engage Latinas on the platform and provide valuable hiring opportunities.

Grassroots Initiatives

Community Engagement:

Organize free or low-cost basketball clinics in Latino-majority neighborhoods featuring WNBA trained coaches.

Education Partnerships:

Establish WNBA staff to serve as ambassadors, visiting schools, and community organizations to promote the league and its opportunities.



MLS

Latinos are among the most passionate supporters of Major League Soccer (MLS), contributing significantly to the league's cultural and economic success. Latino fans exhibit 39 percent higher avidity and 22 percent greater social media engagement than the general population, making them one of the league's most valuable demographics (Nielsen, 2024).

Despite this influence, Latinos remain underrepresented in leadership and executive roles within MLS, highlighting a missed opportunity for the league to better reflect its most dedicated fan base in decision-making processes.

Recognizing the potential for growth and alignment, Capitanes del Futuro PRO: Camino al Liderazgo proposes a pathway to address this gap. By building on the success of grassroots programs like Capitanes del Futuro, this initiative focuses on fostering leadership development and creating opportunities for Latinos to excel at the highest levels within MLS. It is a step toward ensuring the league's future leadership is as diverse and dynamic as the fans it serves (Lapchick et al., 2022).

Initiative:

Capitanes del Futuro PRO: Path to Leadership (Camino al Liderazgo)

Capitanes del Futuro PRO: Camino al Liderazgo is designed to create pathways for Latino leaders to thrive in executive positions within Major League Soccer. With Latino fan engagement increasing by 15 percent year-over-year among English-dominant Latinos (Nielsen, 2024), this initiative responds to the growing cultural and economic influence of this demographic. Latino fans are 39 percent more likely to recommend brands sponsoring sports and 11 percent more likely to

purchase from them (Nielsen, 2024), underscoring their importance to the league's success.

By addressing the underrepresentation of Latinos in leadership, the program aligns with MLS's broader goals of inclusion and innovation while honoring the contributions of its most loyal fan base.

The program incorporates mentorship with Latino MLS professionals, real-world learning experiences through MLS challenges, and executive-led workshops on cultural intelligence and leadership. These components are designed to equip participants with the skills, experiences, and networks necessary to succeed in executive roles.

Latino MLS fans show
22%
greater social media
engagement than the
general population

(Source: Nielsen, 2024)

The following strategies outline how the program will achieve these goals:

Structured Mentorship Programs:

Pair participants with Latino MLS professionals to provide career guidance, psychosocial support, and leadership development.

Action Learning Projects:

Engage participants in real-world MLS challenges, allowing them to showcase their talent through leadership.

Dynamic Leadership Tracks:

Implement flexible pathways for participants, including job rotations and performance feedback, to prepare them for diverse leadership roles.

Executive-Led Workshops:

Facilitate sessions led by MLS executives to teach mentorship, cultural intelligence, and leadership strategies.

Robust Tracking:

Develop systems to measure participant outcomes and refine the program based on feedback and performance metrics.

Alumni Networks:

Establish lasting networks to support lifelong professional development and leadership opportunities.



COLLEGE SPORTS

Latinos remain significantly underrepresented in college sports, both on the field and in leadership roles, despite being one of the fastest-growing demographics in the United States. This lack of representation creates barriers to equity, cultural engagement, and innovation within collegiate athletics. As evidenced by a 500 percent increase in Georgia's Latino population over the past decade (Gilroy, 2007), colleges are uniquely positioned to address these disparities through intentional recruitment, grassroots involvement, and leadership development.

Programs like the University of Georgia's Latino Pipeline Program demonstrate how deliberate action can create transformative opportunities for underrepresented groups. By fostering Latino representation in both athletic participation and leadership, colleges can better reflect the diversity of the communities they serve while driving cultural and economic growth.

Building on this foundation, Elevando el Juego: Latino Representation in College Sports proposes a comprehensive strategy to address these disparities and ensure long-term inclusivity within collegiate athletics.

Initiative: Elevating the Game (Elevando el Juego)

Elevando el Juego: Latino Representation in College Sports is a multifaceted initiative aimed at closing the gap in Latino participation and leadership within collegiate athletics. By integrating strategies across recruitment, mentorship, grassroots development, and institutional support, the program creates sustainable pathways for Latino student-athletes and professionals.

Partnerships with organizations like the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) will enhance diverse hiring, while grassroots programs and mentorship opportunities will inspire and support Latino youth from middle school onward. With 72 percent of Latino sports fans belonging to Gen Z or millennials (Nielsen, 2024), this initiative positions colleges to align with the future of sports fandom, driving equity, cultural engagement, and long-term success.

The following targeted strategies outline how *Elevando el Juego* will achieve these goals:

Inclusive Hiring Practices

Develop Partnerships:

Collaborate with organizations like HACU to source qualified Latino candidates for coaching and administrative roles.

Set Benchmarks:

Require diverse candidate pools for leadership positions, with explicit targets for Latino representation in final interview stages.

Internal Accountability:

Establish hiring panels that include Latino representatives to ensure diverse perspectives in hiring decisions.

Professional Development:

Offer mentorship and training programs for Latino staff and student-athletes to prepare them for leadership roles, inspired by diversity-focused corporate leadership accelerators.

Grassroots Initiatives

Early Engagement Programs:

Launch initiatives targeting Latino youth as early as middle school, modeled after UGA Days, to inspire athletic and academic aspirations.

Mentorship Opportunities:

Link Latino students with college athletes and administrators for guidance and encouragement.

Community Collaboration:

Work with community organizations to provide after-school sports programs focusing on skill-building and leadership.

Financial and Institutional Support

Scholarships and Financial Aid:

Offer targeted scholarships and financial aid for Latino student-athletes.

Family Outreach Programs:

Address cultural and language barriers through family-focused initiatives, ensuring holistic support for student success.

Accountability

Stakeholder Input:

Regularly adapt strategies based on feedback from Latino stakeholders to ensure effectiveness and inclusivity.

Evaluation Metrics:

Implement robust systems to track the program's impact on Latino representation and participation.



CONCLUSION

The underrepresentation of Latinos in US sports presents a significant challenge as well as an immense opportunity for transformative change. Through targeted initiatives, sports leagues and collegiate athletics can break down systemic barriers, leverage the growing influence of Latino fandom, and empower a new generation of leaders and athletes.

This report serves as a call to action, urging the sports industry to embrace its responsibility as a platform for representation and change—ensuring that the future of American sports is truly representative of its people.

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About



LiS™: Latinos in Sports is a new multitiered platform designed to showcase the positive contributions of Latinos in the business of sports through highly curated convenings, content, career resources, and comunidad for current and aspiring executives in the global sports industry.



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