

A large crowd of runners at a marathon, many wearing blue 'KidsFit' t-shirts. The runners are of various ages and are gathered together, some looking towards the camera and others looking forward. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the density of the crowd.

Running Toward Community: Linking Youth Fitness Programs to Your Existing Races

Running USA 2026. St. Louis, MO



Session Objectives

- What the program is
- Why it should be replicated
- How you can replicate it in your community



Health and Fitness

- IU Health 500 Festival Mini-Marathon
- Delta Dental 500 Festival 5K
- Indy Mini Expo
- 500 Festival Miler Series, presented by OrthoIndy
- 500 Festival Post Race Party, presented by PNC Bank

Youth

- JPMorgan Chase 500 Festival Kids' Day
- 500 Festival Rookie Run, presented by Peyton Manning Children's Hospital
- 500 Festival & Indianapolis 500 Education Program, presented by Riley Children's Health
- 500 Festival KidsFit Program

Community and Celebration

- 500 Festival Kickoff to May, presented by STAR Bank
- 500 Festival Parade
- American Legion 500 Festival Memorial Service
- 500 Festival Breakfast at the Brickyard, presented by CHA
- 500 Festival Corporate Member Program
- 500 Festival Volunteer Program, presented by Citizens Energy Group

College

- 500 Festival Princess Program, presented by The National Bank of Indianapolis
- 500 Festival Intern Program
- 500 Festival Leadership Development Program, presented by FORVIS Mazars

INDIANA UNIVERSITY HEALTH
MINI MARATHON
500 FESTIVAL

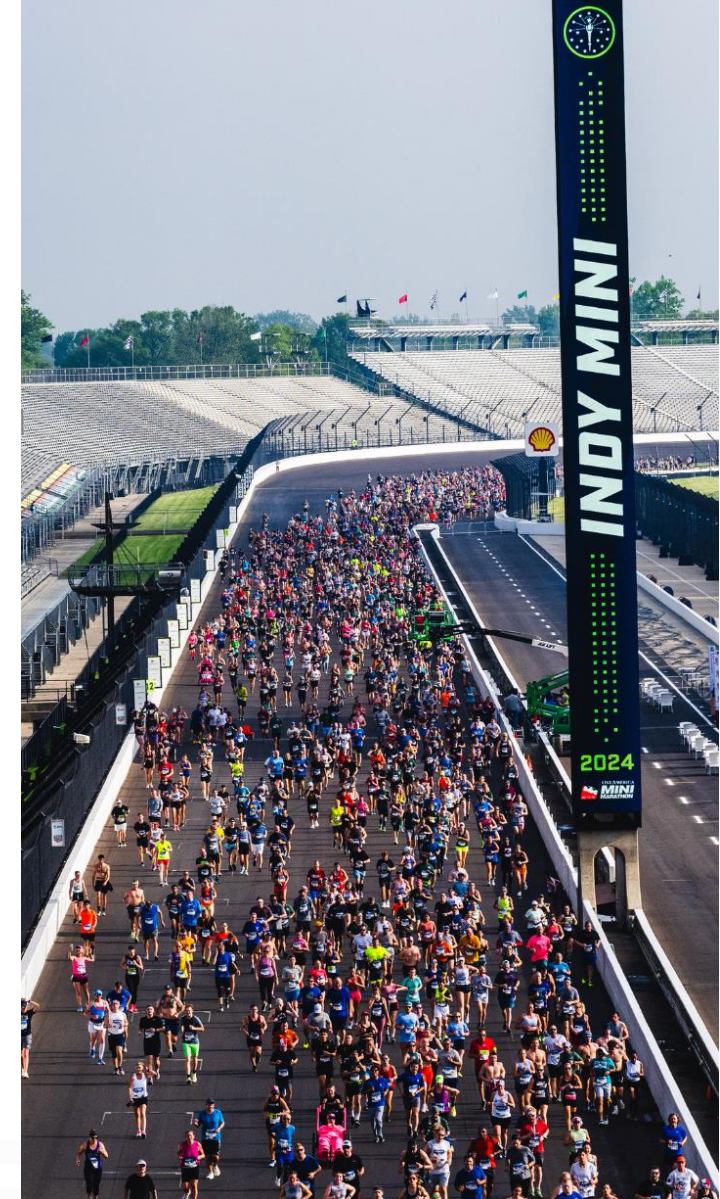
DELTA DENTAL
5K
500 FESTIVAL



May 2

IU Health 500 Festival Mini-Marathon & Delta Dental 500 Festival 5K

- The Greatest Spectacle in Running® –is where participants journey through the heart of downtown Indy, take a 2.5-mile lap around the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and conquer a legendary 13.1 miles. This year is the 50th running of the Mini-Marathon!
- Named one of America's Best 5K races, the Delta Dental 500 Festival 5K takes place prior to the Indiana University Health 500 Festival Mini-Marathon. 3.1 miles of excitement and live entertainment.





Why KidsFit Began

Seeing the Need and Filling a Gap

- Limited access to running programs
- Desire to create a future runner pipeline
- Aligning our mission with the community need

500 Festival KidsFit Program

- The KidsFit Program gets Indiana kids moving while teaching them how to pursue a healthy lifestyle.
- This free, customizable program is designed for kids in grades K-6 and is available to schools and groups. By the end of the program, kids will have completed 13.1 miles – the equivalent of a half marathon!
- Participating groups have 2 options to complete the program in person: KidsFit Final 5K or Mobile Runs.





Program Structure

- Accessible by design
- For grades K-6
- Two main curriculum formats
 - K-3
 - 4-6
- Primarily school based participation

Mobile Runs

- 1 mile fun run at your school
- Full race experience: bibs, start/finish structure, runner services items
- Schools provide course
- Up to 10 schools statewide annually
- Completely free for schools





KidsFit Final 5K

- Takes place during the 5K on mini marathon day
- Completely free for students
- Full 5K race experience: shirt, bib, medal, start wave, runner services, post race party etc.
- Transportation reimbursement for schools
- Clear connection to the mini marathon







Connecting to a Major Race

Branding, Messaging, and Tradition

- Branding and shared messaging
- Race themed curriculum
- “This is May” and “Greatest Spectacle in Running”





Sponsorship and Sustainability

- New funding opportunities
 - Education, health, and family-focused sponsors
 - Grant funding
- Building the event pipeline means long term sustainability and growth





Impact and Outcomes

Measuring Success

- Participation and retention
 - Overall reg, schools engaged
- Community impact
 - Provide an experience that students may not have had access to otherwise- that's a success
- Growth takes time- celebrate the small wins!

Step 1

Understand Your Community Need

- Do any other programs already exist?
- Connect with your current audience
- Decide what fits:
 - Standalone youth event or race day experience
 - Full program or single youth run
- Be honest about staff and volunteer capacity





Step 2

Building Relationships

- Connect with community leaders
 - School admins, local teachers, group organizers
- Find the early champions and build around their needs
- Define the basics: program length, ages, geography, cost





Step 3

Learn From Others

- Connect with organizations already doing youth programs
 - Think outside of the box
- Not a one size fits all, but you can borrow ideas and build off other programs



Step 4

Do Not Over Complicate It

- Start small
 - What existing program pieces can you utilize?
- Remember the program can evolve over time



**Will a youth program work
with your community race?**



Yes!

- Not a one size fits all
- Every community has different need, assets, and constraints
- The model adapts, but the mission stays the same

