



RISE AS ONE

The blueprint for building women's and girls' hockey in Canada



Issued on behalf of the 15 Women's and Girls' Hockey Steering Committee members who believe in the limitless potential of our National Winter Sport:

Gillian Apps (committee chair)

Hockey Canada Board of Directors and National Women's Team (NWT) alumna

Pierre Arsenault

chief executive officer of U SPORTS

Therese Brisson

president and chief executive officer of Alpine Canada and NWT alumna

Cassie Campbell-Pascall

broadcaster, special advisor to the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) and NWT alumna

Debra Gassewitz

retired president and chief executive officer of the Sport Information Resource Centre

Jayna Hefford

senior vice-president of hockey operations for the PWHL and NWT alumna

Katherine Henderson

president and chief executive officer of Hockey Canada

Marian Jacko

Hockey Canada Board of Directors

Angela James

Hockey Canada Foundation Board of Directors and NWT alumna

Rob Knesaurek

senior vice-president of youth development and industry growth with the National Hockey League

Anne Merklinger

chief executive officer of Own the Podium

Mary-Kay Messier

chief marketing officer for Bauer Hockey

Brad Morris

Hockey Canada Foundation Board of Directors

Allison Sandmeyer-Graves

chief executive officer of Canadian Women & Sport

Kim St-Pierre

director of business operations for the Montréal Victoire and NWT alumna

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RISE AS ONE	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
HOCKEY CANADA: ENABLING A WORLD-CLASS HOCKEY ECOSYSTEM AND CULTURE	7
THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY IN CANADA	8
NATIONAL DISCUSSION PAPER: BUILDING THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY	9
WHAT WE HEARD FROM CANADIANS	10
GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RECOMMENDATIONS	13
RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY IN CANADA	14
WHAT'S NEXT?	30
THANK YOU FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE	31





RISE AS ONE

Women's and girls' hockey isn't just growing across Canada, it's exploding.

We have more women and girls playing, coaching, officiating and engaging with our National Winter Sport than ever before, with no sign of slowing down.

We live in a reality where **girls and their families can cheer on their favourite professional women's hockey players with their club teams and with Team Canada** throughout the season.

As registration records continue to be broken, instead of wondering what the ceiling of women's and girls' hockey might be, **we're looking at how we can shatter it even quicker.**

And at a critical moment for our country, **Canada's National Women's Team is preparing to wear the Maple Leaf with pride on the world's biggest stage** in February and bring the gold medal home, where it belongs.

But as much as there is to be proud of with respect to how far the sport has come, now is not the time to rest on our laurels.

It's a time to focus on what can be realized, if all Canadians play a role in reimagining what women's and girls' hockey – and sport – can bring to our country.

It's a transformational moment for Hockey Canada, our Members, Government, Corporate Canada and Canadians to invest in the women's and girls' game like never before.

It's our collective chance to ensure Canada's success on the international stage isn't something we take for granted, but instead an area where we infuse resources in order to remain the best in the world for generations to come.

It's the inflection point for us as parents and Canadians to ask ourselves if we're providing our kids and neighbours with the welcoming environments that they need to be their best selves on and off the ice.

And it's an opportunity to hit the reset button to not just revisit issues that have historically negatively impacted women's and girls' hockey in Canada, but solve them once and for all.

Just imagine what women's and girls' hockey **can be.**

Imagine a game where **girls have the choice to play** hockey in their communities without any barriers or discrepancies.

Where Canada wins gold medals internationally and in its delivery of the grassroots game.

And **where the only involvement that politics has in hockey is working collaboratively with government to provide funding, arenas and programs for girls and women** to experience the benefits of being active, healthy and part of a team.

Throughout this blueprint, you will read about the 14 recommendations that are being put forward to enhance women's and girls' hockey in Canada.

But these aren't our recommendations.

They were developed after hearing from thousands of Canadians why women's and girls' hockey matters to them and how we can elevate it.

These recommendations are yours, Canada.

Together, we can make women's and girls' hockey mean so much more.

There can be pathways for girls to play hockey that are designed with their development in mind.

Barriers can be broken down to welcome more participants and new communities to the game.

The delivery of women's and girls' hockey can be standardized across the country, giving them unprecedented choice to play the game we all love.

Our university women's hockey system can be strengthened by a Canadian Development Model that keeps more girls playing the game, giving U SPORTS women's hockey programs more players to choose from.

Hosting the Women's Worlds in Canada can be as marquee an event as the World Juniors.

We can have 170,000 women and girls playing hockey by 2030 in a system that is designed to provide them with positive experiences.

And then?

Canada will be an even stronger hockey nation.

Together, we will.

For her.

Let's Rise as One.



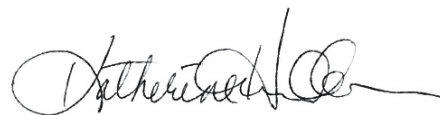
Jonathan Goldbloom

Chair, Hockey Canada Board
of Directors



Gillian Apps

Hockey Canada Board Member
and Chair, Women's and Girls'
Hockey Steering Committee



Katherine Henderson

President and Chief
Executive Officer,
Hockey Canada

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Launched in June 2024, Hockey Canada's Women's and Girls' Hockey Steering Committee, which was comprised of 15 individuals with significant experience in women's hockey and sport and chaired by Gillian Apps, volunteered their time to review existing barriers in women's and girls' hockey. They then listened to Canadians and developed formal recommendations to guide the game forward.

Last year, the committee's national discussion paper identified six key barriers that are obstructing Hockey Canada's vision to have 170,000 girls and women playing hockey by 2030:

- **Structure of Women's and Girls' Hockey**
- **Equity in Resource Allocation**
- **Policy and Governance**
- **Education and Training**
- **Data**
- **Visibility and Celebration**

After hearing from over 7,500 Canadians, the committee delivered 14 recommendations for Hockey Canada, its Members, and corporate, government and sport partners to begin implementing by no later than 2028:

1. Implement Canada's new women's and girls' hockey development model
2. Secure the commercial sustainability of women's and girls' hockey
3. Strengthen governance and oversight nationally
4. Standardize regional delivery of girls hockey
5. Improve funding and support for women's and girls' hockey
6. Increase equitable access to ice time and facilities
7. Strengthen women's and girls' hockey partnership ecosystem
8. Eliminate barriers in underserved communities
9. Advance gender equity by mandates and monitoring
10. Build data foundations to enable key priorities
11. Drive visibility of women's and girls' hockey with the broader public
12. Enhance leadership and coaching pathways for women
13. Educate the ecosystem on the benefits of women's and girls' hockey
14. Establish girls hockey milestone celebration program

Each recommendation addresses at least one of the six barriers from the national discussion paper, and has been grouped into one of three chronological buckets: game changers (5-10 years), building blocks (3-4 years) and accelerators (1-2 years).

Six recommendations are set to begin being addressed in 2026, with another five slated for 2027 and the final three in 2028.

Detailed breakdowns of each of the 14 recommendations can be found beginning on page 14.

HOCKEY CANADA: ENABLING A WORLD-CLASS HOCKEY ECOSYSTEM AND CULTURE

As the national governing body for hockey, Hockey Canada works with its 13 provincial and territorial Members, key stakeholders and partners to enable a positive hockey ecosystem that supports the delivery of hockey at every level.

Hockey Canada also oversees our country's national team programming, including the National Women's Team, National Women's Development Team and National Women's Under-18 Team.



In each province and territory, there is one Member who oversees sanctioned hockey, except in Ontario where there are three: the Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF), Hockey Eastern Ontario and Hockey Northwestern Ontario.

For Ontario, women's and girls' hockey is governed by the Ontario Women's Hockey Association (OWHA), which is a member partner of the OHF.

There are regional differences between how women's and girls' hockey is delivered in Ontario compared to other provinces and territories, including that any girl playing minor hockey with boys is currently ineligible to play on Team Ontario in any high-performance competition in accordance with the OWHA's policies.

As the association with the greatest number of women's and girls' participants in the country, the OWHA has been critical to the growth of the women's and girls' game for over 50 years and should be congratulated for its pioneering to build the sport.

While there are difficulties in the delivery of women's and girls' hockey across the country, the unique governance model in Ontario has caused additional challenges as the sport continues to evolve, including inconsistencies with league and association structures, registration reporting, insurance, policies, scheduling, coaching and training processes overseen by the OWHA.

THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY IN CANADA

In the 2024-25 season, more than 115,000 girls laced up their skates to set another annual participation record.

And that national growth didn't stop with players.

Behind the bench, there were 6,322 women coaches, a 4.5% increase from the season before.

Women refereeing spiked 12.6%, with 4,580 officials in 2024-25.

And there was an increase of 6.7% for women serving as bench staff in Canada, jumping to 20,137.

Yet at the same time, we know that women and girls in all aspects of Hockey Canada-sanctioned programs still represent less than 20% of everyone registered.

Only 19% of players in Canada are women.

The percentage of women coaching is just 6.6%.

For officials, 11.3% are women.

And while the number of women serving as bench staff is 40.9%, all four percentages highlight how much more work there remains to be done.

Women and girls also still experience lower retention rates and have a shorter career playing hockey, with the average length for women and girls in the game being more than two years less than men and boys.

And at the national team level, there were no athletes on Canada's National Women's Team in 2024-25 who played their university hockey north of the border.



NATIONAL DISCUSSION PAPER: BUILDING THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY

The committee's national discussion paper *Building the Future of Women's and Girls' Hockey* was delivered in October 2024 and identified six key barriers which will be crucial to overcome for women's and girls' hockey to lead the way with grassroots and competitive programming in Canada and beyond:

- **Structure of Women's and Girls' Hockey**
- **Equity in Resource Allocation**
- **Policy and Governance**
- **Education and Training**
- **Data**
- **Visibility and Celebration**

Within each of these six barriers, several examples were cited that highlight current gaps in women's and girls' hockey in Canada and included fundamental questions that were asked to identify opportunities to address the barriers, including:

- Inconsistencies with governance and program delivery across Canada
- Gender-based stereotypes negatively impacting resources allocated to women's and girls' hockey
- A lack of guidance from Hockey Canada and its Members on how associations should be managing the women's and girls' game
- Not enough entry points to introduce women and girls and have them experience the benefits of playing hockey
- Concerns on aging facilities and that the continued growth of women's and girls' hockey could result in not enough rinks for players to play on
- Challenges with ice equity and priority times being given to groups with agreements that often pre-date local women's and girls' programs
- No specific education or training for women and girls, including coaches and officials
- A lack of support to better resource U SPORTS women's hockey programs to keep more student-athletes at home
- And a need for Hockey Canada and its Members to design pathways to keep more girls in the game for longer

The discussion paper also introduced Vision 2030, a bold ambition to have more than 170,000 women and girls playing hockey in Canada by 2030, which would be an increase of approximately 55,000 participants from those registered in Hockey Canada programs for the 2024-25 season.

However, achieving this milestone will only be possible if the Canadian hockey system is prepared to continue to support the unprecedented growth that has been experienced in recent years, which has been especially evident with the record-breaking participation of women and girls.

It will also require Hockey Canada, its 13 Members, partners, all levels of governments and the PWHL to work collaboratively to ensure the sustainability of women's and girls' hockey across the country.

The findings and barriers outlined in the national discussion paper guided the questions asked to Canadians as part of IMI International's nationwide research, and the data from that research helped inform the steering committee's deliberations on the formal recommendations to enhance women's and girls' hockey in Canada.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM CANADIANS

In collaboration with Hockey Canada and the steering committee, IMI International led nationwide research with sport influencers, members of the Hockey Canada community and general population Canadians to help chart the path forward for women's and girls' hockey in Canada.

Overall, nearly 7,714 Canadians contributed to this research.

Sport Influencers:

Representing organizations across sport, business and entertainment, 83 leaders participated in qualitative interviews with IMI and were asked to rank the six barriers in terms of importance, share their perspectives on how women's and girls' hockey can continue to grow, and what would need to be true to achieve Vision 2030.

The sport influencer group's ranking of the barriers identified Equity in Resource Allocation as the most important one to overcome:

1. Equity in Resource Allocation
2. Structure of Women's and Girls' Hockey
3. Policy and Governance
4. Education and Training
5. Visibility and Celebration
6. Data

Although it is not a listed barrier, a majority of participants identified **safety as a non-negotiable to ensure the sustainability of women's and girls' hockey**, with a **greater emphasis needed to communicate, demonstrate and reinforce Hockey Canada's long-term commitment** to safety to Canadians.

Overall, the sport influencer group consistently acknowledged that women's sports – including hockey – require dedicated efforts to close historical gaps and provide athletes with equal opportunities to succeed, while recognizing that the potential to influence change in women's and girls' hockey in Canada is a significant opportunity for all stakeholders in the game.

“Safety isn't just physical, it's emotional too. Girls need to know they belong and won't face discrimination.”



Hockey Canada Community:

Members of the Hockey Canada community, which included players, coaches, officials, administrators and volunteers, were invited to participate in a qualitative survey that sought diverse perspectives from across the country.

In order to have enough data to properly inform the research, a minimum of 600 respondents were required to complete the survey during an 11-day window.

That target was exceeded by 983% as 6,495 Canadians participated in this phase of the research.

Within each barrier, respondents were asked to describe what the barrier means to them in their own words, which generated overall themes:

1. Equity in Resource Allocation

- Experiences that resources are disproportionately allocated to men's hockey
- Challenges related to insufficient funding and financial support for women's and girls' hockey
- Concerns about limited access to quality facilities and infrastructure for women's and girls' hockey

2. Structure of Women's and Girls' Hockey

- The availability and accessibility of hockey programs designed for women and girls
- The need for structured pathways to ensure the progression of players from grassroots to competitive levels and back to recreational hockey
- Insufficient resources and funding allocated to support women's and girls' hockey

3. Education and Training

- Concerns about the quality and availability of trained coaches for women's hockey programs
- Limited access to training programs, facilities and resources for women and girls
- The need for education programs targeting parents and players to raise awareness about opportunities and resources

4. Policy and Governance

- Criticism of the overall governance structure of women's and girls' hockey as being outdated or ineffective, particularly in Ontario
- Concerns about the inconsistent or inequitable application of policies between men's and women's hockey
- Calls for clearer, more inclusive and equitable policies in women's hockey

5. Visibility and Celebration

- The importance of showcasing women in hockey to inspire young players
- Providing more visibility of women's hockey events, including National Teams
- Better leveraging community events and celebrations to promote women's hockey

6. Data

- Data is currently insufficiently used to support decisions related to women's hockey
- Need for data to help inform equitable distribution of resources and opportunities
- Frustrations about the lack of accessible and transparent data in women's hockey

When asked how they would rate their overall women's and girls' hockey experience compared to their expectations when they began their journey in the game, the three most positive outcomes were **sense of community, celebration of successes and level of competitiveness**.

At the same time, **level of bureaucracy and red tape, costs and scheduling** were identified as the three most critical areas to improve.

Across Canada, the responses indicated that women and girls **want to be in environments where they are comfortable, and have a greater voice** within the hockey ecosystem.

Moving forward, the Hockey Canada community indicated a strong willingness to be part of the positive changes to enhance women's and girls' hockey, **with a desire to prioritize ensuring equity across all levels of the game**.

“

We need better structure from Hockey Canada down to individual associations to provide better accountability.

”

General Population Canadians:

The survey for Canadians was in market for one week and generated 1,136 total responses, using a methodology to ensure diverse representation, including age, ethnicity, region, gender and language.

By and large, Canadians see hockey for girls and women in a favourable light, **with 94% having positive or neutral perceptions of our National Winter Sport.**

When asked for the benefits for girls to play hockey, **health and physical fitness, teamwork and collaboration, and empowerment and confidence** were the three most important.

At the same time, **cost and financial barriers, gender bias and stereotyping, and accessibility and infrastructure** were listed as barriers for why 6% of Canadians have negative perceptions of the game.

In order to move the game forward, **we must continue to listen to those who have had negative experiences with hockey and learn from the challenges they have experienced.**

Only 38% of Canadians were aware of Hockey Canada's commitment to strengthening women's and girls' hockey in Canada, but 55% of them indicated they want to learn more about this work.

For parents of girls, 44% of them were already informed of this commitment and **65% wanted to better understand initiatives to grow the women's and girls' game.**

To address this, Hockey Canada is committing to providing enhanced, and regular, annual public reporting to keep Canadians updated on the progress of the steering committee's recommendations.

Similarly to the Hockey Canada community, the majority of general population respondents reported positive interactions with hockey in Canada, although there was a greater emphasis on the need to address costs compared to the other two research methods.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

When deliberating on the possible recommendations, Hockey Canada's Women's and Girls' Hockey Steering Committee used five guiding principles to guide the group's efforts, while recognizing that the recommendations must support the growth of hockey for everyone:

- 1. Provide participants with positive, safe and inclusive experiences**
- 2. Call for collaboration and community-centric action amongst all stakeholders involved with hockey in Canada**
- 3. Establish a commercial engine for women's and girls' hockey that fuels its future growth through financial sustainability**
- 4. Foster collective progress and advance the women's and girls' game with equitable growth**
- 5. Increase access to the game for women and girls by addressing existing infrastructure challenges**

Moving forward, these principles will be embedded in the work that will action the recommendations into women's and girls' hockey in Canada.

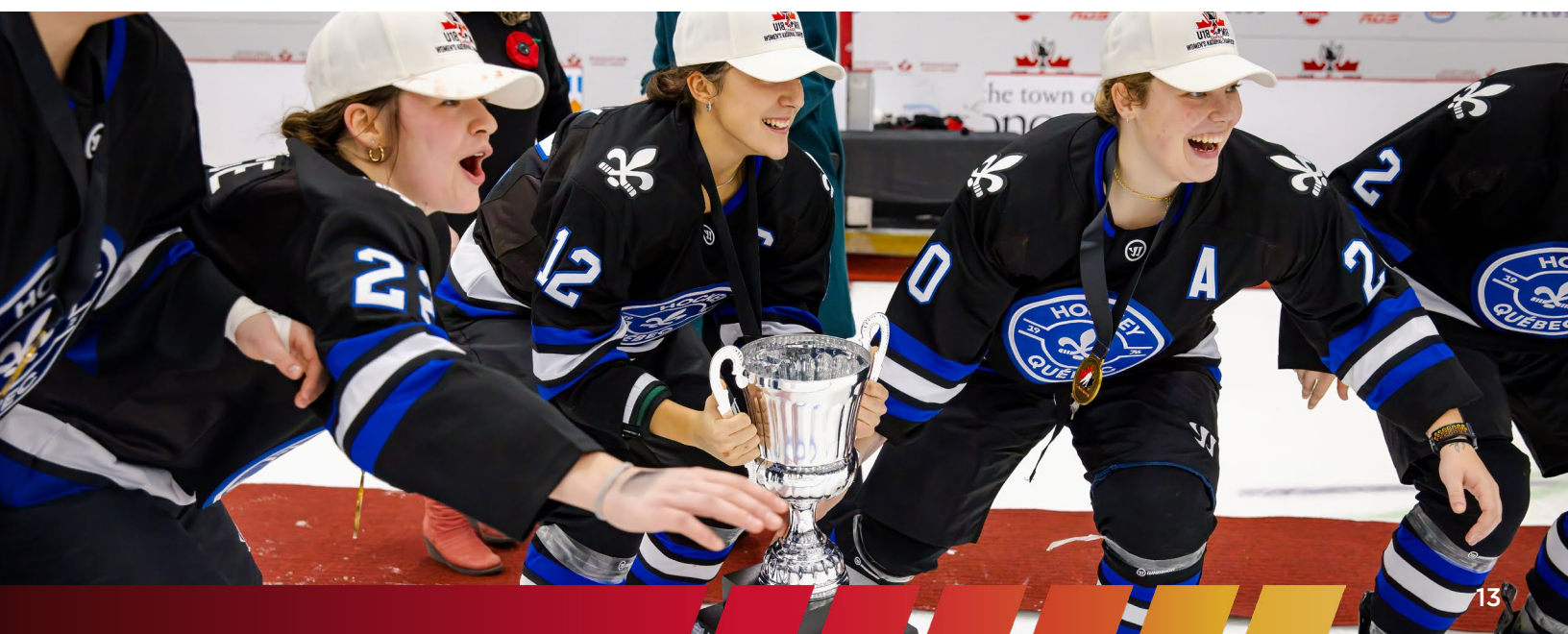
But throughout the committee's work, it became clear that there was one North Star that will be critical to the future of the game: the gift of choice.

All women and girls should have the choice to play hockey in the format that best suits them, if it's available in their community.

If a girl wants to play minor hockey with boys instead of girls hockey, that's her choice.

And if a girl prefers to play girls hockey instead of minor hockey, that's her choice as well.

Because at the end of the day, all women and girls participating in our National Winter Sport are choosing to spend their time, energy and money with hockey and that choice needs to be a two-way street.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY IN CANADA

After reviewing the national research, the steering committee worked with Deloitte Canada to ensure that each of the six barriers are being addressed by the recommendations.

The Women's and Girls' Hockey Steering Committee has delivered 14 recommendations to support the vision to have 170,000 women and girls playing hockey in Canada by 2030 in a system that is healthy, forward-thinking and welcoming to all participants.

Each recommendation falls within one of three groups:

Game Changers (5-10 years)

Building Blocks (3-4 years)

Accelerators (1-2 years)

While the timelines for each recommendation vary, the expectation is that the implementation of all 14 recommendations will begin by the end of 2028.





1. IMPLEMENT CANADA'S NEW WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Game Changer (5-10 years) *Begin execution by 2026*

Creating pathways for all women and girls to play without barriers first women's hockey development model that includes recreational and competitive streams, as well as late-entry points for girls, to increase player choice and development opportunities.

Today's reality:

There is no existing Canadian development model designed specifically for women and girls, and the pathways for women's and girls' hockey continue to have regional nuances, with limited and inconsistent late-entry point options. As well, the majority of women's national team athletes leave Canada to play university hockey.

Vision:

Expand entry-level programming, restructure divisions and formats and establish standards to deliver a dedicated national women's and girls' hockey development model that encourages participation and meets the needs of all participants, ensuring women and girls have the choice to play in their preferred environment without exclusion or penalty.

What does success look like?

Consistent delivery of the women's and girls' hockey development model across Canada is athlete-centred and rooted in Hockey Canada's values, supporting diverse pathways and prioritizing player choice through accessible and inclusive programming for all who play, from pond to podium. Choice is at the forefront of athlete development, with defined pathways to support recreational, competitive and high-performance women's and girls' hockey, and the ability to switch between each stream.

“ We want to encourage girls to play wherever they are in whatever community. ”

Criteria for success:

Women's and girls' hockey development model is fully implemented and operational across all Hockey Canada Members

Increased participation in both the Entry and High-performance streams indicate a balance in community and elite programming, and viable development pathways

Stakeholder feedback is positive across participants, coaches, officials and administrators

Key considerations:

Emphasizing the elements of choice and flexibility during roll-out will ensure all women and girls can see themselves in the model regardless of their level, experience or regional differences

National standards require regional flexibility for practical implementation and to best fit local needs and contexts

As the implementation leader, Hockey Canada must facilitate stakeholder engagement to ensure clarity and alignment, while considering accountability measures for consistent adoption

2. SECURE THE COMMERCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY

Game Changer (5-10 years) *Begin execution by 2026*

Leveraging international events to create a sustainable commercial future for the women's and girls' game and advance its profile and visibility in Canada and around the world.

Today's reality:

Hockey Canada has committed to hosting five international women's championships between 2026 and 2030, offering unprecedented opportunities to grow the profile and revenue of women's events between the IIHF Women's World Championship in 2027 and 2030 and IIHF U18 Women's World Championship in 2026, 2028 and 2030.

Vision:

Build the commercial engine to strengthen the sustainability of women's and girls' hockey, including unlocking new financial opportunities, enhancing government funding and maximizing commercial assets to ensure the sport's prosperous future.

What does success look like?

The IIHF Women's World Championship is appointment viewing for Canadians each year and women's and girls' hockey is underpinned by a robust and diversified economic model, with new revenue streams, effective monetization of existing assets and reinvestment of funds that ensure the sport's long-term growth and impact while maintaining public trust and emphasizing commercial and social value.

“ We need to build revenue through a defined economic engine that is reinvested into women's and girls' hockey. ”

Criteria for success:

Launch and demonstrate measurable growth of new revenue streams

Increased monetization and commercialization of existing assets and upcoming events, including the 2027 IIHF Women's World Championship in Canada

Year-over-year increase in funds reinvested directly into women's and girls' hockey development programming

Key considerations:

Connection of commercial activities with stories of social impact ensures positive engagement and visibility, while capturing data provides the ability to demonstrate tangible value

Bold and innovative strategies should be considered to support game-changing growth and impact, such as private capital, new or joint commercial ventures and privatization of assets

Progress can be accelerated by building on work already underway for the 2027 IIHF Women's World Championship

3. STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT NATIONALLY

Game Changer (5-10 years) *Begin execution by 2027*

Building full-time roles dedicated to growing women's and girls' hockey across Canada to increase resources for women and girls and create national standards.

Today's reality:

Hockey Canada's women's and girls' hockey department is led by Marin Hickox, who joined the organization in 2022 to drive collaboration across Canada, and is supported by dedicated women's and girls' hockey staff members. At the provincial and territorial level, there are dedicated full-time women's and girls' hockey staff with some of Hockey Canada's Members, but it remains inconsistent across the country.

Vision:

Across Canada, have at least one full-time, salaried employee dedicated to women's and girls' hockey in every province and territory to help increase participation and prioritize safety, foster collaboration, facilitate knowledge sharing and strengthen capacity.

What does success look like?

Women's and girls' hockey is guided by unified leadership with dedicated staff with every Member, ensuring consistent standards, participant safety and community-driven priorities are delivered across Canada.

“ Both decision-making authority and safety will be key in the governance of women's and girls' hockey in Canada. ”

Criteria for success:

Full-time, salaried women's and girls' hockey staff positions are filled with every one of Hockey Canada's Members

Adoption of the Canadian Sport Governance Code is complete within two years

Stakeholder feedback indicates improved collaboration, participant safety and focus on community priorities specific to women and girls

Key considerations:

Incorporating Hockey Canada's values through strong, values-driven leadership is essential to ensuring safety and excellence across all programs and participant experiences

It will be critical that full-time hires have decision-making authority and the support of their organizations to ensure they can actively influence structures and governance in their region

Strengthening governance and oversight across all Members establishes the foundation to successfully deliver consistent experiences within regional and local programs

4. STANDARDIZE REGIONAL DELIVERY OF GIRLS HOCKEY

Game Changer (5-10 years) *Begin execution by 2028*

Developing consistent delivery of women's and girls' hockey in every province and territory to eliminate regional challenges, including a lack of choice.

Today's reality:

The delivery of women's and girls' hockey in Canada continues to have unique, regional differences, especially in Ontario where the game is governed by the Ontario Women's Hockey Association (OWHA) – a member partner of the Ontario Hockey Federation – rather than the province's three hockey governing bodies. As well, the viability, or lack thereof, for women's and girls' hockey programs can vary in rural and urban settings across the country.

Vision:

Evolve governance models to align delivery across regions to ensure consistent, high-quality experiences, reduce inefficiencies and elevate the interest of women and girls, including through a review and alignment of Ontario's delivery model with national standards to preserve player choice and support expanded flexibility and collaboration.

What does success look like?

Girls across Canada experience consistent and equitable access to high-quality hockey programs, with no girl excluded.

“ We want to make sure women and girls have choice and are not penalized based on the organization they played for. ”

Criteria for success:

High satisfaction with the consistency, fairness and quality of girls hockey experiences nationwide

Equal access to consideration for high-performance programs available with every Member, reflected by representative participation in elite pathways

Standardized registration, insurance, reporting and coaching and training processes are implemented and actively used by all Hockey Canada Members

Key considerations:

Significant progress can be achieved through the implementation of the Women's and Girls' Development Model and strengthening national governance and oversight

Hockey Canada will work with its three Ontario Members and the OWHA on how to strengthen and modernize the existing governance model in Ontario

By benchmarking women's and girls' hockey programs and establishing non-negotiables, Hockey Canada can ensure opportunities are not limited in any region

Transition support and consultation will be required in regions with limited capacity and player populations to maximize national consistency

5. IMPROVE FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY

Building Block (3-4 years) *Begin execution by 2026*

Increasing opportunities through innovative and intentional investments to better support women's and girls' programs across Canada and address historical resource challenges for the women's and girls' game.

Today's reality:

While the investment towards women's and girls' hockey has grown exponentially from Hockey Canada, its Members, sport partners and Corporate Canada in recent years, continuing to enhance the funding towards it in the national hockey system, especially at the grassroots level, will be critical to ensuring that the women's and girls' game realizes its full potential.

Vision:

Transform budgeting and funding processes through strategic planning, dedicated funding streams and innovation funds to increase investment in women's and girls' hockey at every level, and consider tying funding to measurable gender equity targets.

What does success look like?

Enhanced and strategically allocated funding drives dedicated investment in women's and girls' hockey, enabling sustainable evolution and growth of women's and girls' participation, while advancing measurable gender equity outcomes.

“ We need to identify and commit funding as part of a dedicated women's and girls' hockey investment strategy. ”

Criteria for success:

Year-over-year increase in the proportion of Hockey Canada funds dedicated to women's and girls' hockey

Increase in new or expanded initiatives by Hockey Canada focused on advancing gender equity targets and widespread uptake among Members and community organizations

Positive stakeholder feedback on the impact of enhanced funding and resource allocation

Key considerations:

Identify mutual strategic priorities around women's and girls' hockey with stakeholders, including the Hockey Canada Foundation, to converge resources and realize economies of scale in investment

Impact realized from this recommendation is highly dependent on developing new and optimizing current revenue streams to grow the overall pie

Tying funding and support to clear gender equity targets can enhance transparency, accountability, and support on how funds are distributed and used

6. INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ICE TIME AND FACILITIES

Building Block (3-4 years) *Begin execution by 2026*

Addressing infrastructure challenges to break down barriers to access ice and facilities in light of aging rinks and inequitable ice time for women and girls throughout the country.

Today's reality:

Canada has approximately 2,700 rinks, yet as many are over 50 years old and in their senior life cycle phase. Across the country there are increasingly more challenges to secure ice and resources to build or renovate rinks. In addition, ice contracts for individual facilities that have been ongoing for many years often pre-date women's and girls' programming in communities, resulting in women's and girls' teams playing and practising during less high-demand times.

Vision:

Establish policies, partnerships and infrastructure strategies to ensure equitable access to ice time and facilities, including optimizing current ice time allocation and investing in new or upgraded facilities essential for the growth of women's and girls' hockey in Canada.

What does success look like?

Barrier-free access to ice and facilities at all levels and in every region of Canada that supports the sustained growth and integration of women's and girls' hockey in all communities.

“ We just don't have the rinks available for equitable access and we need to focus on infrastructure. ”

Criteria for success:

Increase in total ice time allocated to women's and girls' hockey that is representative of the region's player population

Development and implementation of an infrastructure strategy led by Hockey Canada and dedicated funding stream to build and upgrade facilities, with policies around equitable access and sustainability

Equal opportunity in consideration for peak ice times as reflected by a greater proportion of high-demand times prioritized for women and girls

Key considerations:

Clearly defining equitable access is required to guide policy and measure progress

Hockey Canada cannot deliver on this alone: building and upgrading infrastructure requires collaboration with public and private partners, and equitable access requires incentivization among community operators

Creatively optimizing the use of existing facilities in off-peak hours and leveraging activities related to hockey, including floor hockey or ball hockey, can engage participants while long-term infrastructure is developed

The lack of ice and facilities in Canada is a national challenge for all streams of hockey, including men and boys and para hockey

As facilities are municipally- or privately-owned, Hockey Canada and its Members do not have direct control of them

7. STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY PARTNERSHIP ECOSYSTEM

Building Block (3-4 years) *Begin execution by 2027*

Aligning priorities to elevate partnerships in women's and girls' hockey and enhance visibility for champions at all levels of the game through collaborative, year-round campaigns.

Today's reality:

The visibility of women's and girls' hockey has never been stronger: Vladimir Guerrero Jr. showed his support for Marie-Philip Poulin as he wore her jersey to Game 7 of the 2025 World Series and NHL players across Canada have worn their respective city's PWHL jersey to games this season. At the same time, there remains much more room for growth in the national hockey ecosystem with intentional partnerships that align and unify stakeholders to have maximum impact.

Vision:

Forge formal partnership with key internal and external hockey stakeholders to strengthen player and leader development, elevate visibility, align resources and drive long-term growth of the women's and girls' game.

What does success look like?

Active collaboration between key internal and external stakeholders fosters a dynamic ecosystem of connected partners, from community to international organizations, that is aligned and unified in a clear direction that will ensure women's and girls' hockey's long-term growth.

“ Both internal and external stakeholders add value to the hockey ecosystem and we need to think differently and broader about opportunities. ”

Criteria for success:

Growth in the number, diversity and positive return on investment of formal partnership agreements

Increase in co-branded campaigns and shared content that raise awareness and visibility of women's and girls' hockey at the local and national levels

Positive feedback from partners and stakeholders on collaboration effectiveness and alignment with Hockey Canada's strategic priorities

Key considerations:

Engaging both hockey stakeholders and external ecosystem partners creates more opportunities for players and leaders at every level of the game

Maximizing resources by identifying and leveraging underutilized partner assets can expedite impact across the ecosystem

Collaboration with the Hockey Canada Foundation provides an immediate opportunity for the support of community-level initiatives

8. ELIMINATE BARRIERS IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Building Block (3-4 years) *Begin execution by 2027*

Welcoming more participants to hockey, including through non-traditional streams, and working to remove barriers that have historically limited access for women and girls to experience the game.

Today's reality:

The introduction of entry-level programs like The First Shift have transformed how participants in underserved communities can experience hockey, however there remains much more work to be done to understand what other non-traditional streams can be explored and what barriers have limited women's and girls' participants in those communities from experiencing the game, including cost, equipment and limited access to ice.

Vision:

Eliminate barriers by implementing targeted programs focused on funding support, access to equipment and coaching resources and modified league structures in communities where girls hockey participation is below the national average.

What does success look like?

Girls hockey participation consistently meets or exceeds the national average in underserved demographic communities, with vibrant and inclusive engagement that not only provides an outlet for physical activity, but a community of belonging in women's and girls' hockey.

“It will be essential to first identify these communities and understand their challenges before establishing ways in which we can support them.”

Criteria for success:

Communities with greatest need for funding and resources are identified and engaged through targeted programming

Uptake of alternative entry points, including ringette, ball hockey and floor hockey, leads to eventual participation in ice hockey

Increased resources and programs are delivered through partnerships and collaborative initiatives with community organizations

Key considerations:

Data is foundational to identifying underserved communities, understanding barriers to participation and measuring progress to close these gaps

Modified league structures, including shorter seasons, and alternative entry points are innovative solutions that can help reduce barriers such as limited access to facilities

Strong community partnerships present an opportunity to accelerate progress against this recommendation

Hockey Canada's newly-created Indigenous Advisory Circle can support advancing this recommendation

9. ADVANCE GENDER EQUITY BY MANDATES AND MONITORING

Building Block (3-4 years) *Begin execution by 2028*

Ensuring proper representation in leadership roles throughout the game, including coaches, officials and administrators, to have women and girls represented more equitably.

Today's reality:

In the 2024-25 season, there were 31,039 women coaching, officiating or serving as bench staff in Hockey Canada-sanctioned programs. However that represents just 17% of all coaches, officials and bench staff and highlights the need for intentional efforts to grow the number of women in leadership positions in the game, including in administrative and board roles. Since 2022, the Hockey Canada Board of Directors has achieved gender equity, but this feat remains inconsistent on hockey boards throughout the country.

Vision:

Implement concrete measures to advance gender equity in women's and girls' hockey nationally by linking funding to equity targets and mandating transparent reporting to ensure increased representation and development of women in leadership and decision-making roles.

What does success look like?

Women and girls are equitably represented in leadership and decision-making roles nationwide, with opportunities for development and advancement accessible, visible and actively supported across Canada.

“Developing emerging women leaders is essential to the future of women's and girls' hockey in Canada.”

Criteria for success:

Consistent year-over-year increase in the number of women participating and advancing in leadership development programs

Increase in the number of women coaching relative to the women's and girls' participant population, reducing the gap compared to men in coaching relative to the men's and boys' participant population

All Hockey Canada Members submit transparent, regular reports on gender equity metrics and progress

Key considerations:

Progress against this recommendation can be enhanced by strengthening national governance and oversight, including collecting Member feedback to develop mandates and provide implementation support

Establishing data channels for reporting and monitoring and tying support and funding for adoption and compliance are critical for success

Regional population and resource differences require tailoring of targets at the local level for realistic execution

10. BUILD DATA FOUNDATIONS TO ENABLE KEY PRIORITIES

Accelerator (1-2 years) *Begin execution by 2026*

Utilizing data to move the game forward for women and girls and support its sustained growth, which will help organizations make informed decisions to continue to advance women's and girls' hockey in Canada.

Today's reality:

The Hockey Canada Registry now captures participation data from across the country, but there remain gaps in how data is tracked, uploaded and reported on throughout the country, especially with the Ontario Women's Hockey Association.

Vision:

Establish the processes and technology required to enable Hockey Canada and its Members to make data-driven decisions, develop evidence-informed strategies, capture and analyze program outcomes and report on progress of key initiatives that support the growth of women's and girls' hockey in Canada.

What does success look like?

Fully adopted and accessible data and reporting systems will provide transparent tracking of key women's and girls' hockey priorities, and empower organizations to measure progress, assess impact and make informed decisions to support the continuous improvement of women's and girls' hockey across the country.

“ We don't know where we are today and need to establish baseline metrics to help define growth. ”

Criteria for success:

Establish baseline metrics to assess current state and have ongoing data available to track year-over-year

Have a reporting system that is actively used across all of Hockey Canada's Members to capture and analyze women's and girls' hockey data

Provide regular measurement and reporting of progress and impacts

Key considerations:

Prioritization of this recommendation is foundational to the successful implementation, execution and measurement of all other recommendations

Identifying metrics of interest and integrating clear data reporting protocols for key priorities and initiatives is essential to developing ongoing measurement capacity

Increased transparency around data and reporting has the potential to drive widespread benefits, including building evidence-informed funding cases and demonstrating progress towards the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

11. DRIVE VISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY WITH THE BROADER PUBLIC

Accelerator (1-2 years) Begin execution by 2026

Developing proactive marketing campaigns that showcase women's and girls' hockey and are multi-faceted to consistently celebrate and inspire players, coaches, officials, administrators, volunteers, fans and Canadians.

Today's reality:

The launch of the Professional Women's Hockey League has highlighted the appetite for year-round, consistent coverage of women's and girls' hockey, and increasing storytelling at all levels – including for Canada's national teams – would further engage Canadians and grow interest in the women's and girls' game.

Vision:

Implement national visibility strategies to spotlight the women's and girls' hockey movement through multi-channel outreach to amplify role models and inspire the next generation.

What does success look like?

Increased public engagement and media presence through creative, multi-channel storytelling that spotlights diverse women's and girls' hockey role models on and off the ice, and inspires the next generation of Canadians.

“ We currently depend on a one-channel approach and it's not enough. ”

Criteria for success:

Greater engagement with women's and girls' hockey content and broadcasts

Ongoing execution of a multi-faceted content strategy with new partnerships that increase targeted content shared across women's and girls' hockey

An increase in community-based events and campaigns across Canada

A comprehensive communications plan is developed and implemented for this blueprint, which includes regular updates on progress to achieving the 14 recommendations

Key considerations:

Increased visibility of women's and girls' hockey drives benefits across the entire ecosystem and developing a strategy for content sharing among partners is a proven method to increase reach and engagement

Leveraging data will be a key enabler as it will equip Hockey Canada to better identify target demographics and tailor messaging for greater success

Targeting content to diverse audiences will be important to increase reach and impact

12. ENHANCE LEADERSHIP AND COACHING PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN

Accelerator (1-2 years) *Begin execution by 2027*

Designing and highlighting pathways for women in coaching and leadership roles, including through training, certification and mentorship programs designed for women, to better support women leaders in the game.

Today's reality:

The 31,039 women who coached, officiated or served as bench staff during the 2024-25 season was an increase of 7.1% from the 2023-24 season, but there remains a lack of understanding of the pathways for women to be in leadership positions in the game and a lack of education and training programs dedicated to them.

Vision:

Establish robust pathways to increase women's representation in leadership and coaching by implementing female-focused training and certification programs, dedicated funding support, structured mentorship and clear representation targets.

What does success look like?

Increased representation of women in coaching and leadership roles, including as officials and administrators, across all levels of hockey and supported by accessible development pathways, targeted training and positive experiences that ultimately inspire both new and retiring players to transition into leadership positions.

“There is real value in focusing on retaining and transitioning players to hockey leadership roles after they've stopped playing.”

Criteria for success:

Year-over-year increases in the percentage of women in coaching, officiating and leadership positions, and overall coaches in women's and girls' hockey

Increased number of training, certification and mentorship programs for women with all 13 of Hockey Canada's Members

Positive feedback and satisfaction rates from participants in leadership development initiatives

Key considerations:

The effectiveness and sustainability of leadership and coaching pathways for women are highly dependent on securing improved funding and dedicated support

Developing clear, accessible pathways and having visible role models is essential to attract, retain and advance women and girls in leadership roles, including coaching

Collaboration between hockey and multi-sport organizations can help expand training opportunities and foster a community and culture that values women in leadership positions

13. EDUCATE THE ECOSYSTEM ON THE BENEFITS OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY

Accelerator (1-2 years) *Begin execution by 2027*

Engaging with Canadians to champion women's and girls' hockey through intentional marketing campaigns and partnerships that effectively communicate the benefits of the women's and girls' game and highlight opportunities for Canadians to engage with our National Winter Sport.

Today's reality:

As participation in women's and girls' hockey continues to increase each season, there is a greater opportunity for Hockey Canada to engage its stakeholders to ensure that they are maximizing engagement with women's and girls' hockey participants and fans, and reinforce the positive values that the game brings to Canadians and communities.

Vision:

Deliver educational programs for key stakeholders, including parents, coaches, players and fans to build awareness of women's and girls' hockey and promote participation and development pathways.

What does success look like?

Key stakeholders across the hockey ecosystem are well-informed about the structure, opportunities and benefits in women's and girls' hockey in Canada, resulting in increased awareness, community champions and a strong, positive culture that drives participation and supports a healthy, inclusive environment for all.

“ The key is to reward behaviour and engagement in women's and girls' hockey, with the belief that the benefits will follow. ”

Criteria for success:

Stakeholder feedback indicates increased awareness and understanding of the value proposition of women's and girls' hockey

Strong and growing network of community champions who actively promote and encourage participation in women's and girls' hockey across Canada

Consistent increases in women's and girls' participation following educational campaigns

Key considerations:

Storytelling enhances engagement with educational content, while tangible recognition for participation in educational activities provides incentives to reinforce learning

Tailoring content and targeting stakeholders across channels will enhance education across the ecosystem but requires strong data foundations to understand audiences

Hockey Canada should consider how to best properly incentivize key stakeholders to ensure adoption and participation

14. ESTABLISH GIRLS HOCKEY MILESTONE CELEBRATION PROGRAM

Accelerator (1-2 years) *Begin execution by 2028*

Standardizing national recognition programs that celebrate women and girls in the game and promote champions in the game at all levels, especially for girls in grassroots programs.

Today's reality:

Currently, recognition programs in women's and girls' hockey in Canada is driven locally, regionally or at the provincial and territorial level. While Hockey Canada recognizes and celebrates women and girls throughout the year, there is no standardized national program.

Vision:

Launch a standardized national recognition program to celebrate key milestones and achievements by players and program leaders, including player and leader awards that culminate in day or week-long community-wide celebrations.

What does success look like?

Women's and girls' hockey players and the game are being consistently celebrated nationwide, inspiring participation, skill and leadership development and community spirit in alignment with Hockey Canada's values, while fostering a culture of pride, retention and collaborative best-practice sharing for collective excellence.

“Celebratory programs should have a clear link back to Hockey Canada's values, including excellence.”

Criteria for success:

Skill-based recognition program implemented nationwide at each stage of development

Increased retention among W&G hockey participants and leaders

Positive feedback from participants and communities on the sense of achievement and alignment with Hockey Canada's values

Key considerations:

Buy-in and alignment with community and regional stakeholders is critical to achieve consistency and credibility in delivery

A recognition program's social impact, reach and focus on grassroots participation provides an attractive opportunity for partner investment and stakeholder synergy

Progress towards this will enhance two other recommendations: Drive Visibility of Women's and Girls' Hockey with the Broader Public and Educate the Ecosystem on the Benefits of Women's and Girls' Hockey

WHAT'S NEXT?

The road ahead will not be linear, but it starts in 2026 as Hockey Canada begins to work with the stakeholders mentioned throughout this report to move forward with the implementation of all 14 recommendations.

This includes its 13 provincial and territorial Members, the PWHL, corporate partners, hockey partners and sport partners, as well as federal, provincial and territorial and municipal governments.

Six recommendations are set to begin execution in 2026, the same year that Canada's National Women's Under-18 Team will host the world championship in Nova Scotia:

- **Implement Canada's new women's and girls' hockey development model**
- **Secure the commercial sustainability of women's and girls' hockey**
- **Improve funding and support for women's and girls' hockey**
- **Increase equitable access to ice time and facilities**
- **Build data foundations to enable key priorities**
- **Drive visibility of women's and girls' hockey with broader public**

In 2027, Canada will host the IIHF Women's World Championship in Quebec City, while five additional recommendations will begin to be implemented:

- **Strengthen governance and oversight nationally**
- **Strengthen the women's and girls' hockey partnership ecosystem**
- **Eliminate barriers in underserved communities**
- **Enhance leadership and coaching pathways for women**
- **Educate ecosystem on benefits of women's and girls' hockey**

The three outstanding recommendations are scheduled to be carried out in 2028, when Canada hosts the Under-18 Women's World Championship for the second time in three years:

- **Standardize regional delivery of girls' hockey**
- **Advance gender equity via mandates and monitoring**
- **Establish girls' hockey celebratory milestone program**

Throughout the implementation of the recommendations with its stakeholders, Hockey Canada will report on progress to Canadians through public, annual status updates.



THANK YOU FROM THE WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HOCKEY STEERING COMMITTEE

Hockey matters.

To our country.

To our communities.

To our friends and family.

And to each of us on this steering committee.

18 months ago, we came together as a group with one goal in mind: ensure that the greatest game on earth is positioned to not just support the growth of women's and girls' hockey, but that it can thrive at all levels of the game in Canada.

Since then, we've heard from thousands of people who gave us their perspectives, suggestions and most importantly, their time.

From frustrations that were shared by parents to the success stories we heard from across the country, we were so grateful to all Canadians who contributed to the work that is summarized in today's report.

We are energized by the potential that women's and girls' hockey has in our country, and now it's on all of us to help Hockey Canada bring them to life and continue to grow our National Winter Sport.

The road ahead won't be easy, but we can promise you one thing: it will be worth it.

And the best part is, this is only the beginning.

Thank you for your support of our work and women's sport.

It's time to Rise as One.

Go Canada Go!

