



**ONTARIO MINOR  
HOCKEY ASSOCIATION  
LEARN TO SKATE PROGRAM  
PLAYBOOK**

## The Learn to Skate Program would not have happened without the help of countless volunteers, including:

- Peter Harmsen, OMHA President and Chair of the WSMHA Kids First Fund
- Karen Emmerson (Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association Executive)
- Joe Millage (OMHA Coach - IP Instructor)
- Daren Lee (OMHA Coach - IP Instructor)
- Brad Lee (OMHA Coach - IP Instructor)
- Aaron Yee (Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association Volunteer)



**This playbook celebrates the remarkable success of the OMHA Learn To Skate Program, conducted in partnership with the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association.**

**Below is a detailed summary of key steps to consider when planning to replicate try-hockey initiatives in your community. These actionable insights serve as a practical guide to building successful programs that promote hockey participation, foster inclusivity, enhance skill development, and strengthen community engagement.**



# PROGRAM OBJECTIVES



*“It’s all about building community through skating. We know there are kids and teens in Stouffville who have never been on skates. We want to give them that opportunity to hopefully pick up a pastime they can enjoy for the rest of their lives.”*

*“They’ll learn the fundamentals of skating, and we hope this program will encourage them to come and try hockey with their local hockey association.”*

*Peter Harmsen, President - OMHA*

## Vision

To be the sport of choice for all Ontario families

## Mission Statement

Lead our communities in creating a fun, safe & inclusive hockey experience

## Values

Player focused, inclusive, respect, fun, safety, accountable, community, passion

## Objectives

- **INCLUSIVITY:** Provide a 10-session free skating program for children aged 8-14. The initiative provides the opportunity for older children who have yet to learn to skate the opportunity to try it in a welcoming environment.
- **SKILL DEVELOPMENT:** Teach practical skills like stopping, gliding, and balance.
- **COMMUNITY BUILDING:** Foster connections by collaborating with local minor hockey associations.





# PILOT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



# PILOT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



**The pilot development process examined the necessary steps for creating the program. Each step consisted of a series of subcomponents that needed to be executed. The key inputs and outputs for each step were identified, and the most significant gaps were recognized to inform the implementation plan.**



SIPOC stands for **Suppliers, Inputs, Process, Outputs, and Customers**. It is a high-level process mapping tool used in Lean Six Sigma and process improvement methodologies to visualize and define key aspects of a business process.

**The OMHA SIPOC included the following:**

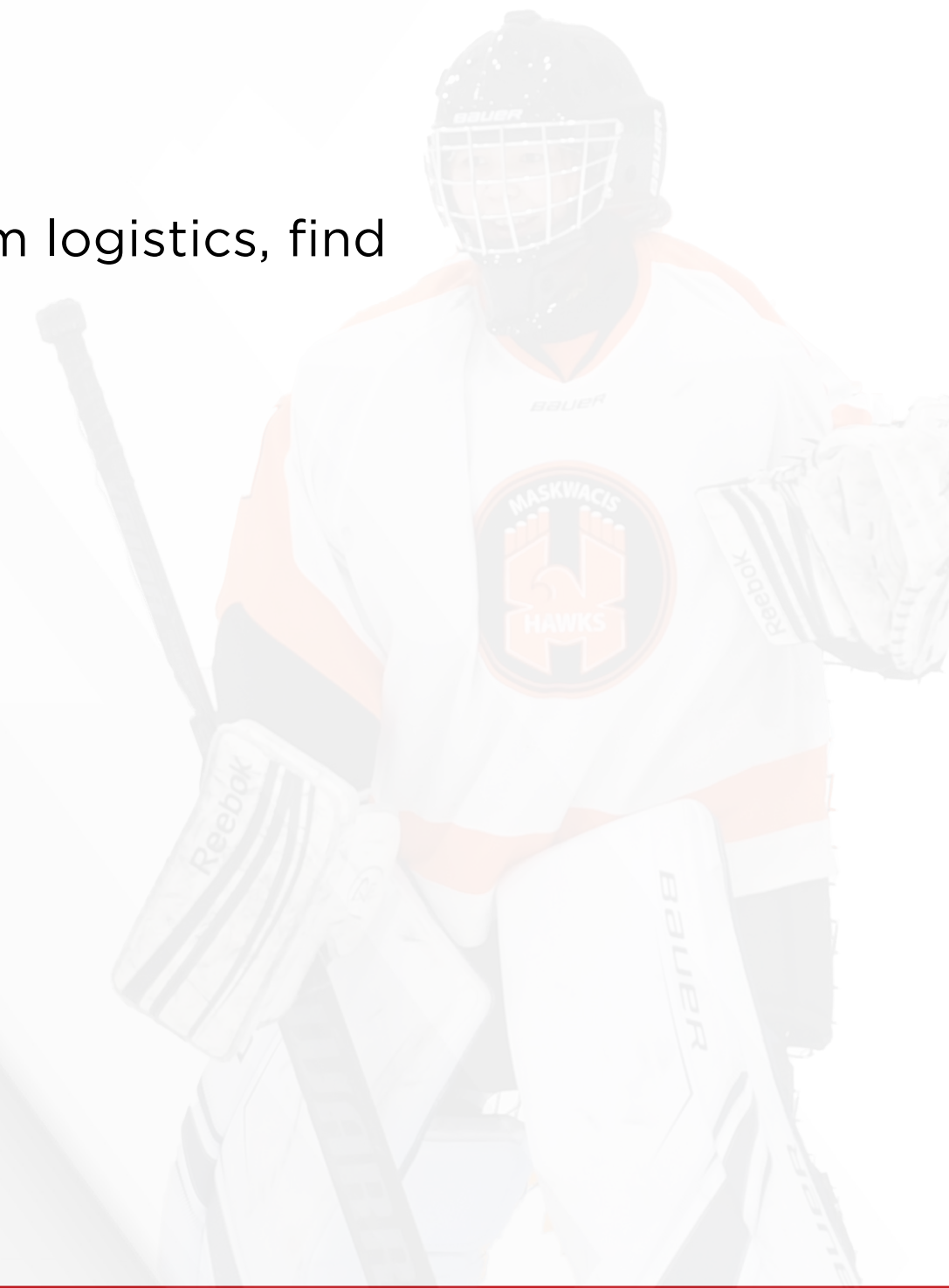
**Suppliers:** Governing body, Parks and Rec, OMHA

**Inputs:** Level of athleticism, accessibility to equipment, outline schedule, ice availability,

**Process:** Document program outline, inform government bodies, develop marketing strategy, plan program logistics, find resources, registration,

**Outputs:** Skating foundation plan, communication, schedule, equipment, registration forms

**Customers:** Player facilitator, parents, schools,



- **COMFORTABLE TAKING THE NEXT STEPS**  
(LEARN TO PLAY HOCKEY, LOCAL HOCKEY ASSOCIATION REGISTRATION)
- **SAFE ENVIRONMENT**
- **EXCITED ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND BEING ON THE ICE**
- **SIMPLICITY**

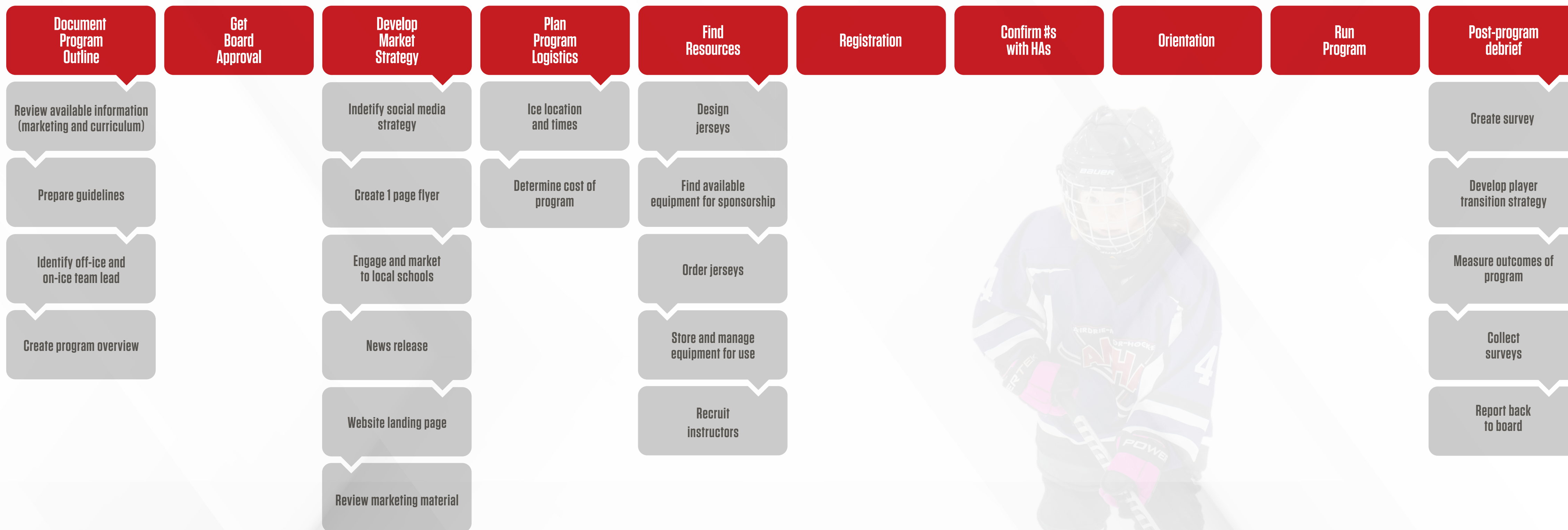




- **WEEK 1 ASSESSMENT OF SKILL LEVEL**
- **ACCESS TO PROGRAM IS FREE**
- **NO EARLY MORNING SESSIONS**
- **CONSISTENCY (DAY AND TIME)**
- **INCLUSIVITY**
- **EASILY ACCESSIBLE**



# PROCESS FLOW DIAGRAM TO UNDERSTAND THE INITIAL ACTION STEPS





# PLAYBOOK



## INITIAL STEPS

**PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** Consistent scheduling helps families plan and commit more easily.

- Plan 10 weekly sessions, each with defined skills (e.g., Week 5: continuous movement and agility drills).
- Establish minimum gear requirements, such as helmets and neck guards.

### Resource Procurement:

- Secure helmets, skates, and other essentials by partnering with a local sports store.
- During orientation, local sports store staff assist with fittings.
- Collect used gear donations from local sponsors.

### Marketing and Outreach:

- Distribute press releases
- Use Facebook for engagement, as it was identified as a highly successful platform during the pilot (other social media platforms are also recommended).

### Registration Logistics:

- Use Hockey Canada's registry for participant insurance and fee waivers.

### Orientation Session:

- Host at the rink where the program will be held.
- Include a fitting session and an agenda explaining the program's goals, weekly structure, and safety protocols.

### On-Ice Instructors:

- Use a sign-up sheet to confirm volunteer attendance, ensuring consistency.
  - \* Doodle Poll is a great tool to use
- On-ice lead instructor must possess Coach Level I, their Respect in Sport Leader Activity (or Speak Out) certification and have undergone a criminal record check and vulnerable persons check
- Ensure there is someone on the ice certified for first aid



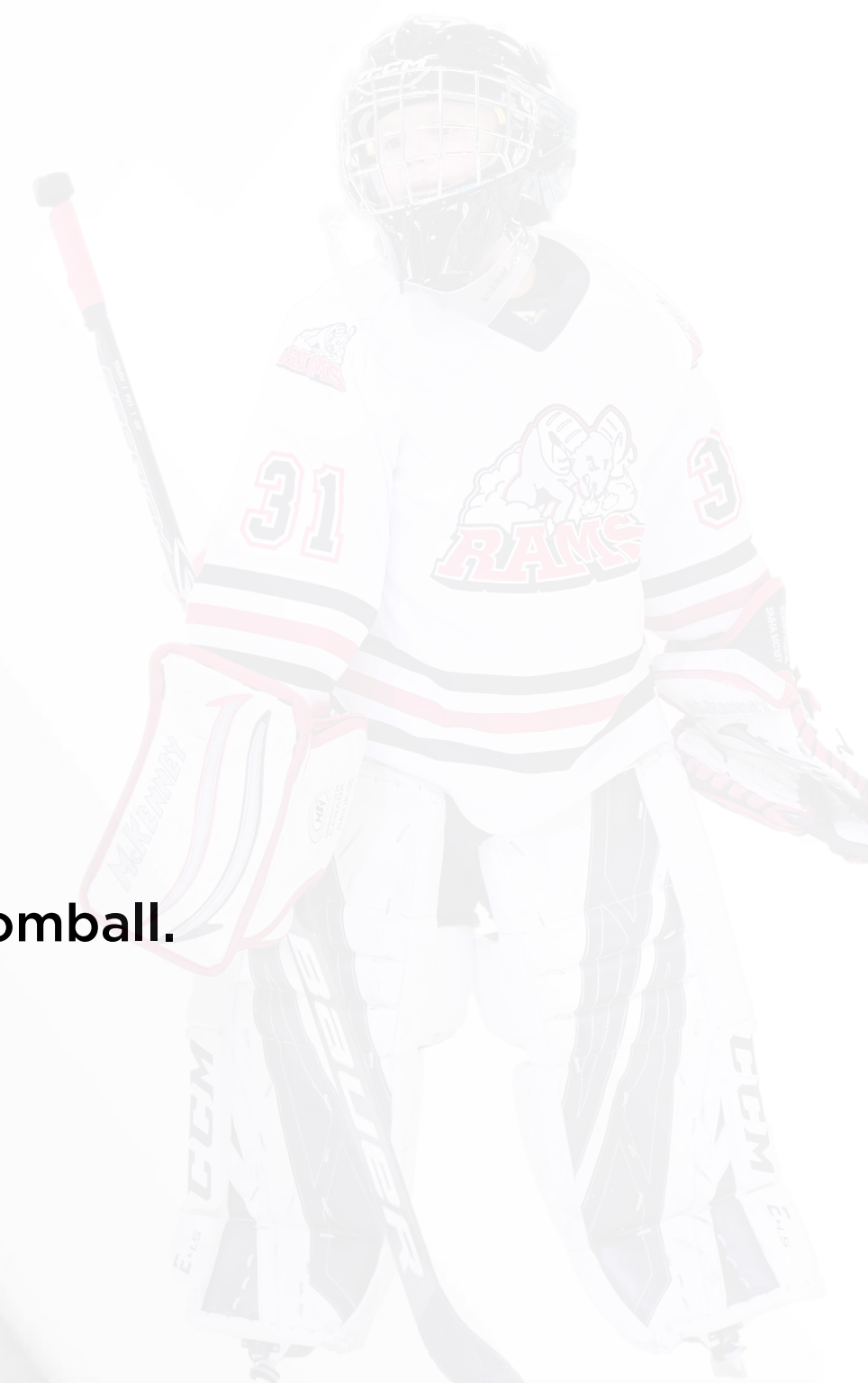
## STEP-BY-STEP EXECUTION

### Orientation Session:

- Kickoff with a message about community impact, led by program lead.
- Gear fitting managed by local sports store staff; participants get a checklist of required equipment.
- This can also be managed by your volunteers and coaches.
- Demonstrate how sessions progress from foundational skills to advanced techniques.

### Weekly Sessions (Example Progression):

- Week 1 (Basics): Teach “getting up”, skating aids for balance, and frozen tag as a game.
- Week 4 (Advanced Skills): Focus on edge riding using marked ice lines and introduce agility drills.
- Week 7 (Stations): Split participants into small groups for activities like karaoke footwork and sculling.
- Week 10 (Finale): Conduct skill contests, such as “How far can you skate in one minute?” Celebratory game of broomball.



## STEP-BY-STEP EXECUTION

### On-Ice Equipment:

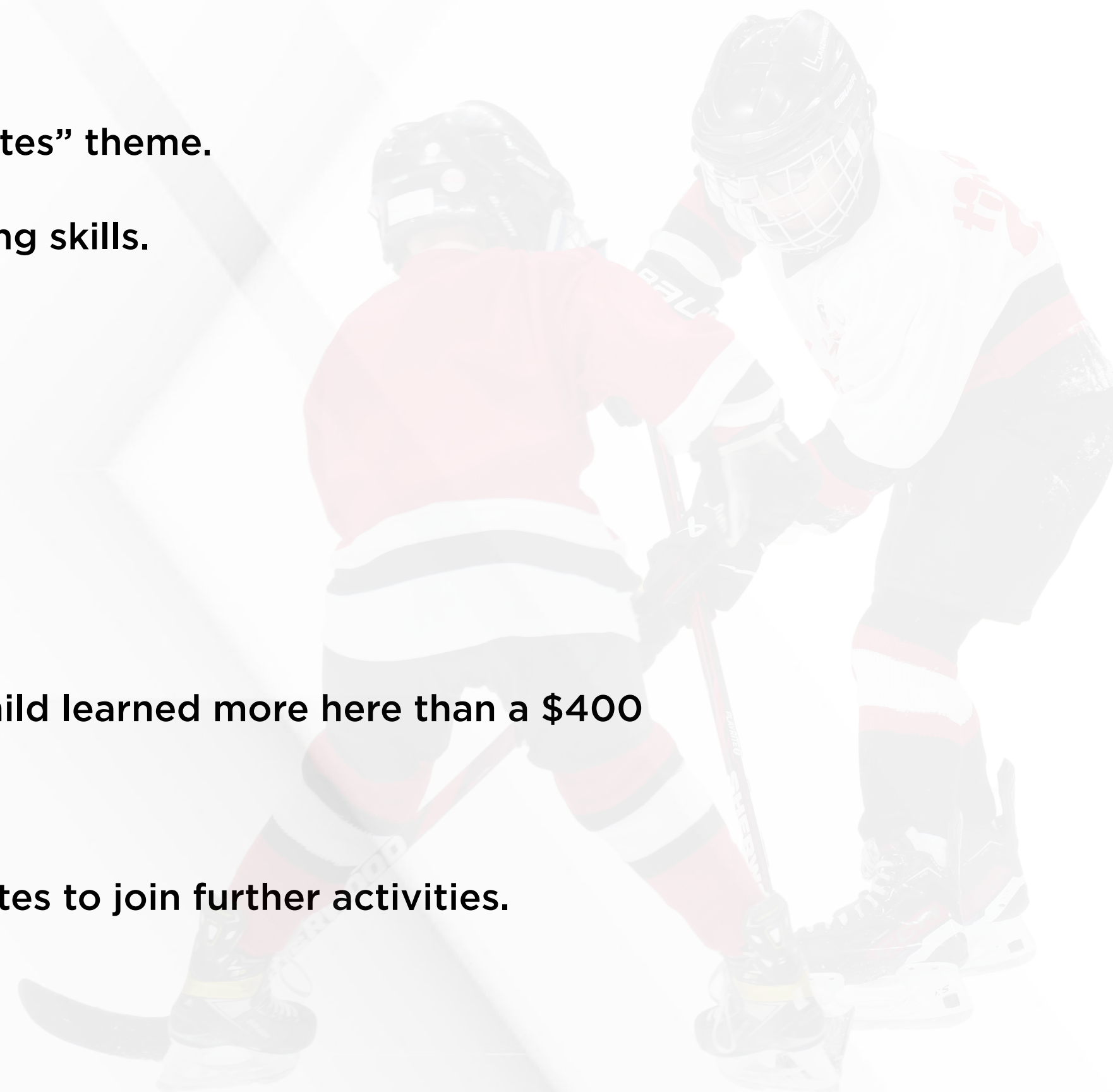
- Sharpies, coloured dots, Bingo daubers (to mark ice), skating aids

### Games and Engagement:

- Have name tags on the helmets of participants and instructors.
- Incorporate fun elements like Halloween costumes during Week 3's "Halloween on Skates" theme.
- Use small-group games (e.g., "Ghosts and Goblins") to build confidence while practicing skills.
- Develop certificate of completion for future programs for participants

### Marketing and Outreach

- **Promotional Campaigns:**
  - \* "FREE SKATING LESSONS FOR YOUTHS IN (NAME OF YOUR CITY) THIS FALL".
- **Social Media Strategy:**
  - \* Post weekly progress and testimonials. Example: Share quotes like, "100000%. My child learned more here than a \$400 course!".
- **Partnerships:**
  - \* Collaborate with local hockey and figure skating clubs to encourage program graduates to join further activities.



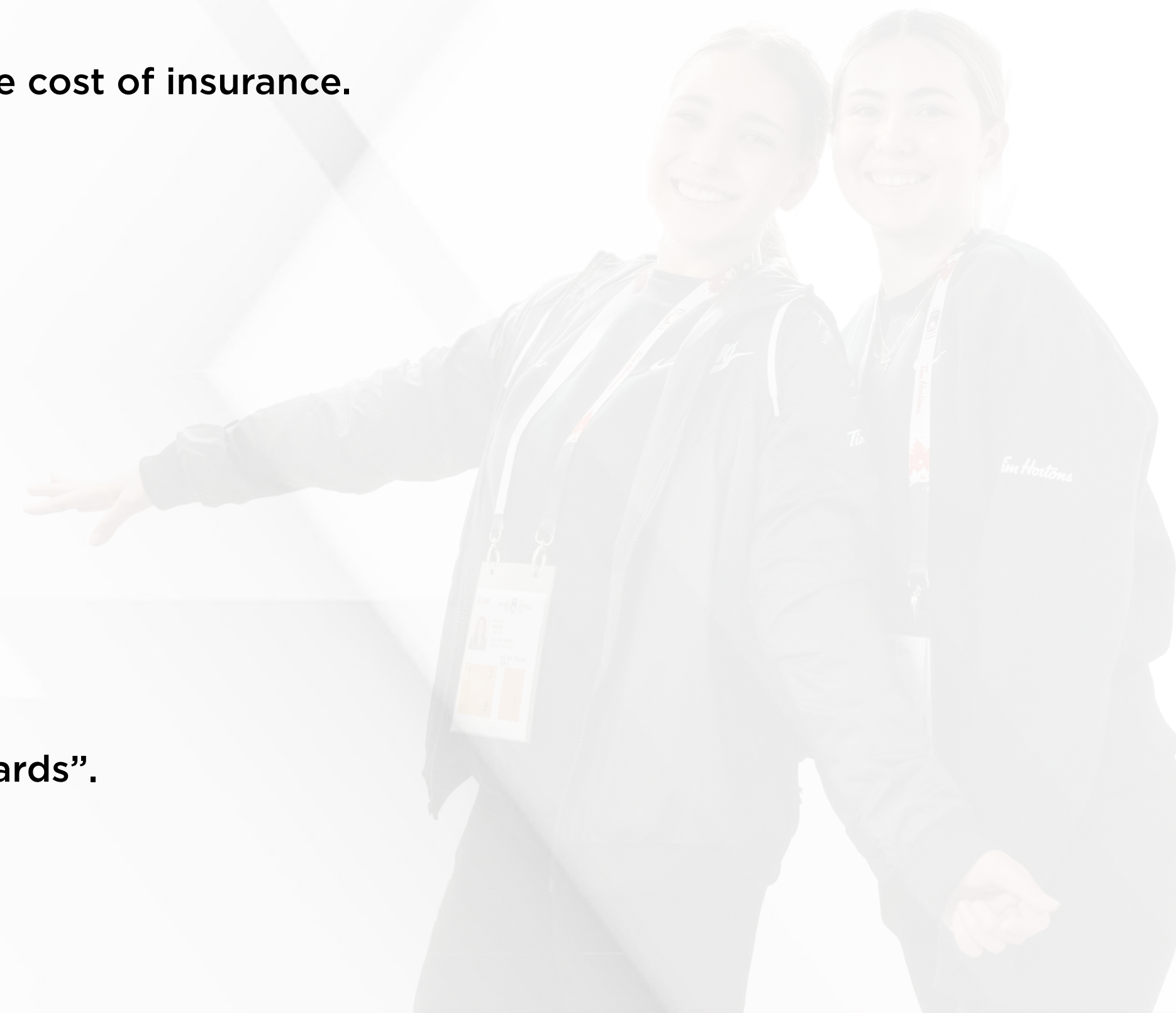
## STEP-BY-STEP EXECUTION

### Resources and Budgeting

- **Budget:**
  - \* Ice Time: Wednesdays 6–8 p.m. at XYZ rink, Pad A.
  - \* Equipment: Helmets, skates, and jerseys.
- **Securing Funds:**
  - \* Try obtaining sponsorships from local groups.
  - \* Explore funding from Hockey Canada to cover participant insurance
    - Pathway to Hockey coverage is the ideal Hockey Canada program to cover the cost of insurance.  
[Click here](#) to find out more.

### Measurement and Evaluation

- **Participant Feedback:**
  - \* Surveys distributed halfway through (Week 6) and post-program.
  - \* Example question:
    - “Would you recommend this program?
      - \* Why or why not?”
    - “Is there something missing from this program?”
  - \* Skill Tracking:
    - Example Metrics:
      - \* Before: “Couldn’t skate without a helper.”
      - \* After: “Skating faster, stopping without boards, and starting to skate backwards”.



## STEP-BY-STEP EXECUTION

### Sustainability and Growth

- **Volunteer Recruitment:**
  - \* Use a sign-up sheet to confirm volunteer attendance, ensuring consistency.
    - Doodle Poll is a great tool to use
- **Building Community Ties:**
  - \* Encourage families to engage with local skating clubs after the program.
- **Iterative Improvements:**
  - \* Introduce certificates of completion and integrate music systems for better engagement during sessions.





# RESULTS



## MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

### PARTICIPANTS

#### SEASON 1

- 2022 fall - 70 participants (8- to 14-year-olds)
- 2023 winter - 35 participants (8- to 14-year-olds)
- 2023 winter - 25 adult participants - Learn to Skate

#### SEASON 2

- 2023 fall - 80 participants (8- to 14-year-olds)
- 2024 winter - 70 participants (8- to 14-year-olds)

#### SEASON 3

- 2024 fall - 80 participants (8- to 14-year-olds)
- 2025 winter - 43 participants (5-, 6- and 7-year-olds)

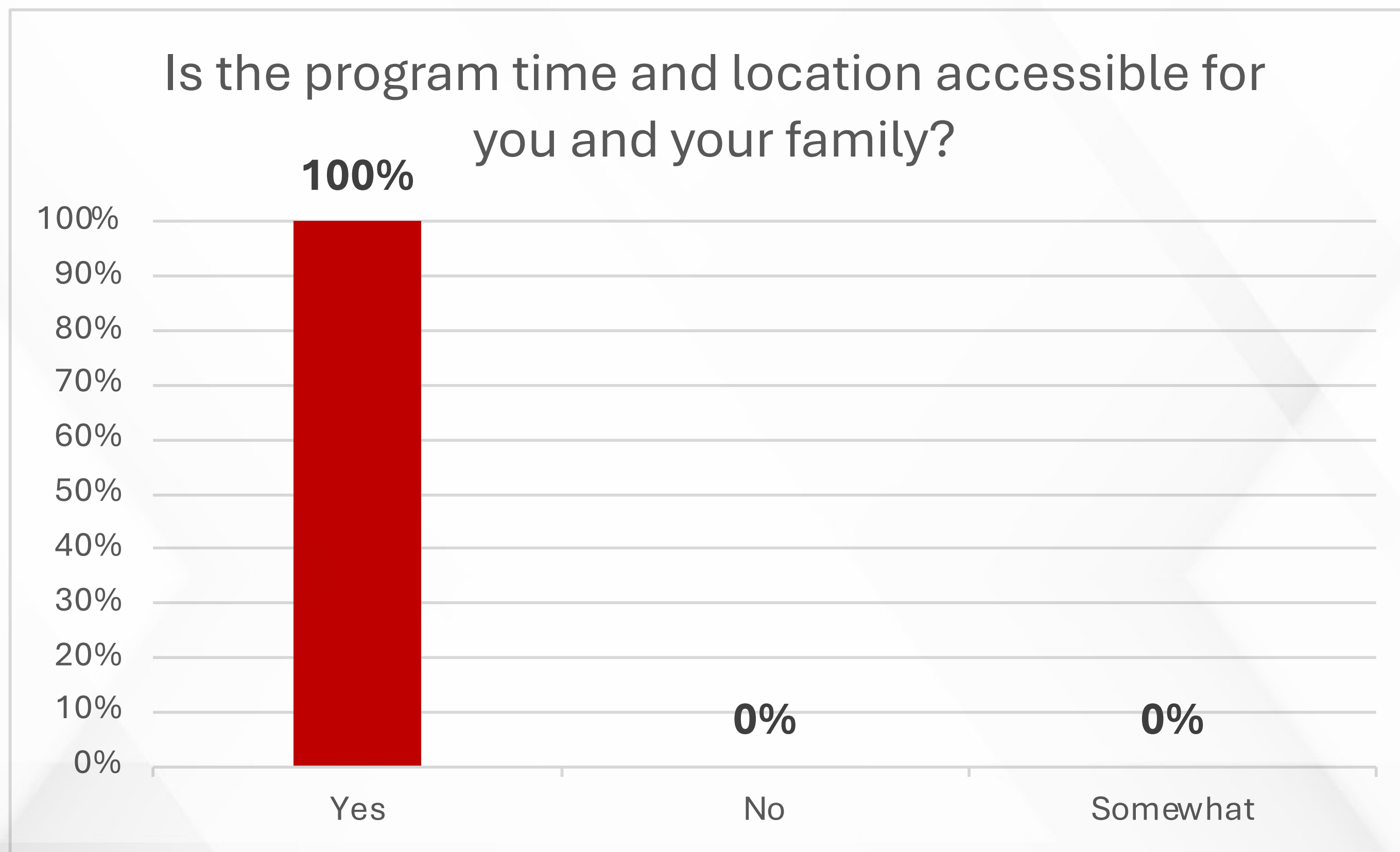
### MORE THAN 90% OF PARTICIPANTS HAVE MOVED ON INTO A LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM OR REGISTERED WITH THEIR LOCAL HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Neighboring associations have also launched similar programs to support player development and participation, including:

- **Aurora Minor Hockey Association** - Operates a **Goalie School**, covering the cost of equipment. If a participant registers as a goalie, they get to keep the gear.
- **Richmond Hill Hockey Club** - Offers an **Introduction to Hockey** program to help new players get started in the sport.
- **Markham Minor Hockey** - Has run an **Introduction to Hockey** program for several years, focusing on **5-, 6-, and 7-year-olds** to build foundational skills and engagement.

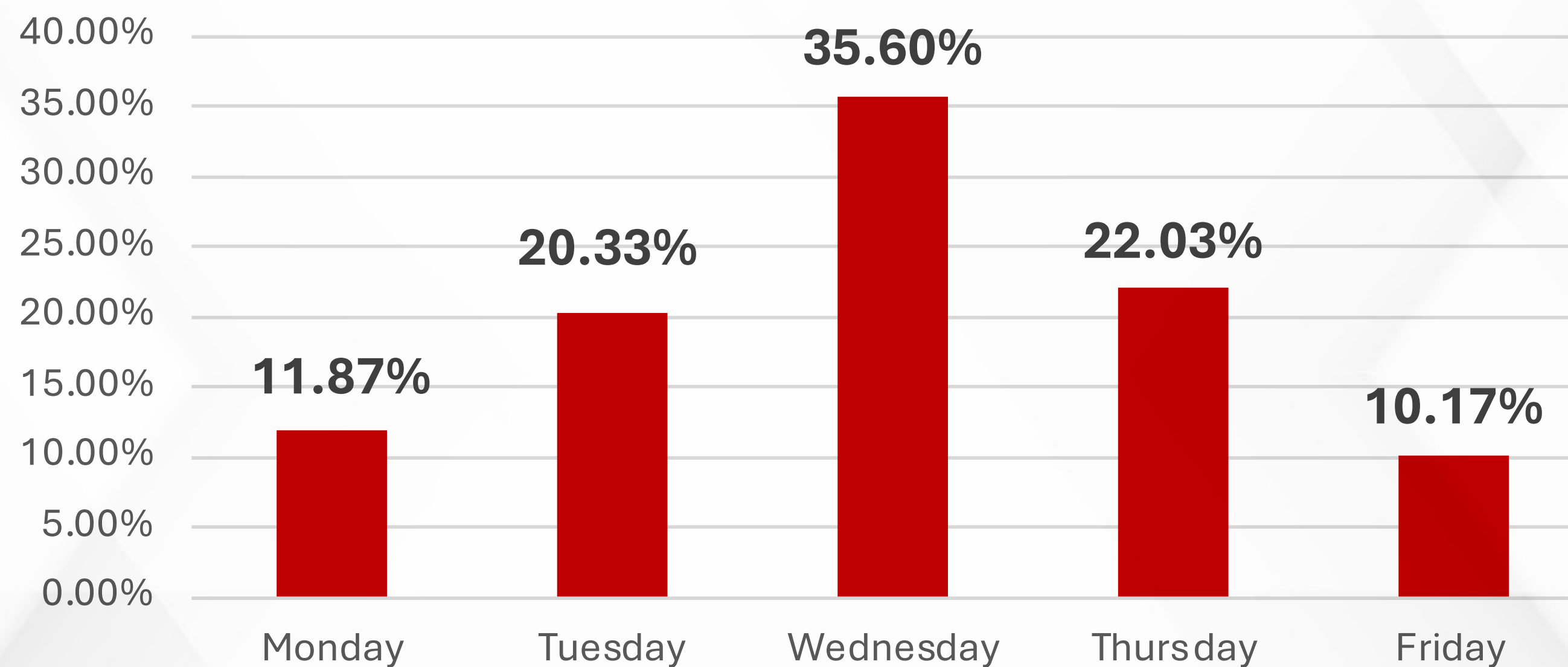


## OMHA / WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE PILOT SURVEY RESULTS

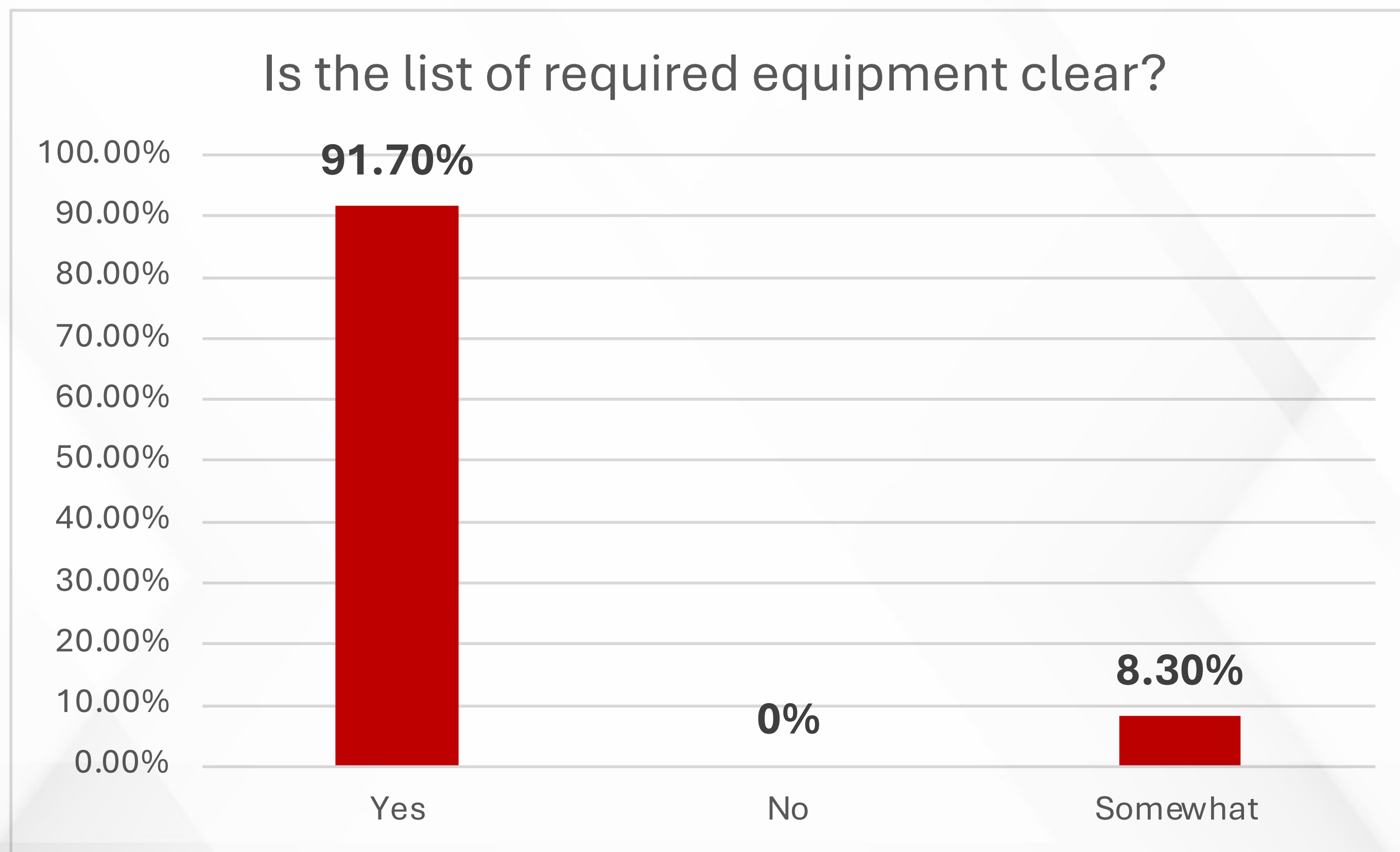


## OMHA / WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE PILOT SURVEY RESULTS

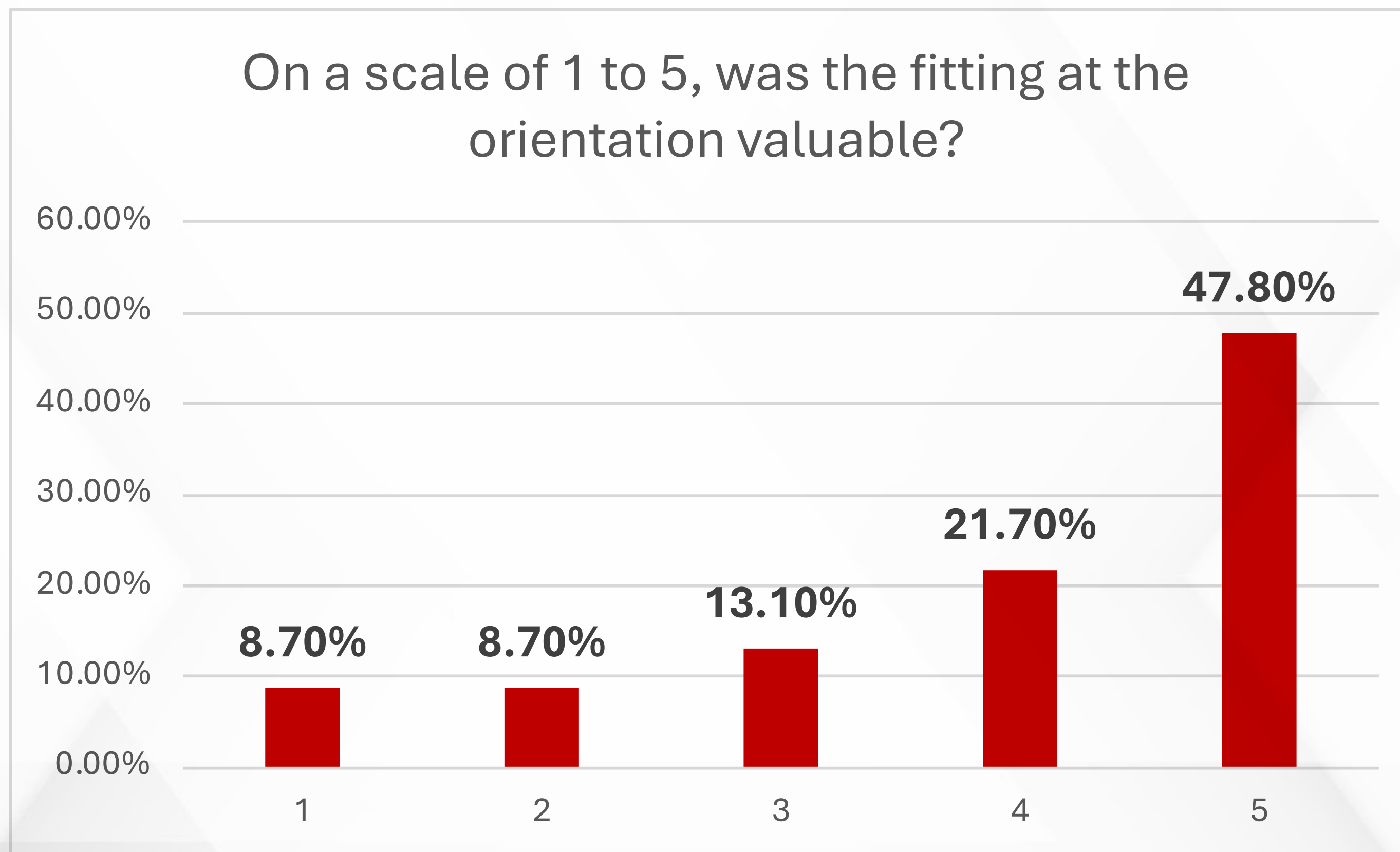
In general, which of the following days of the week are best for you or a member of your family to participate in a program like this?



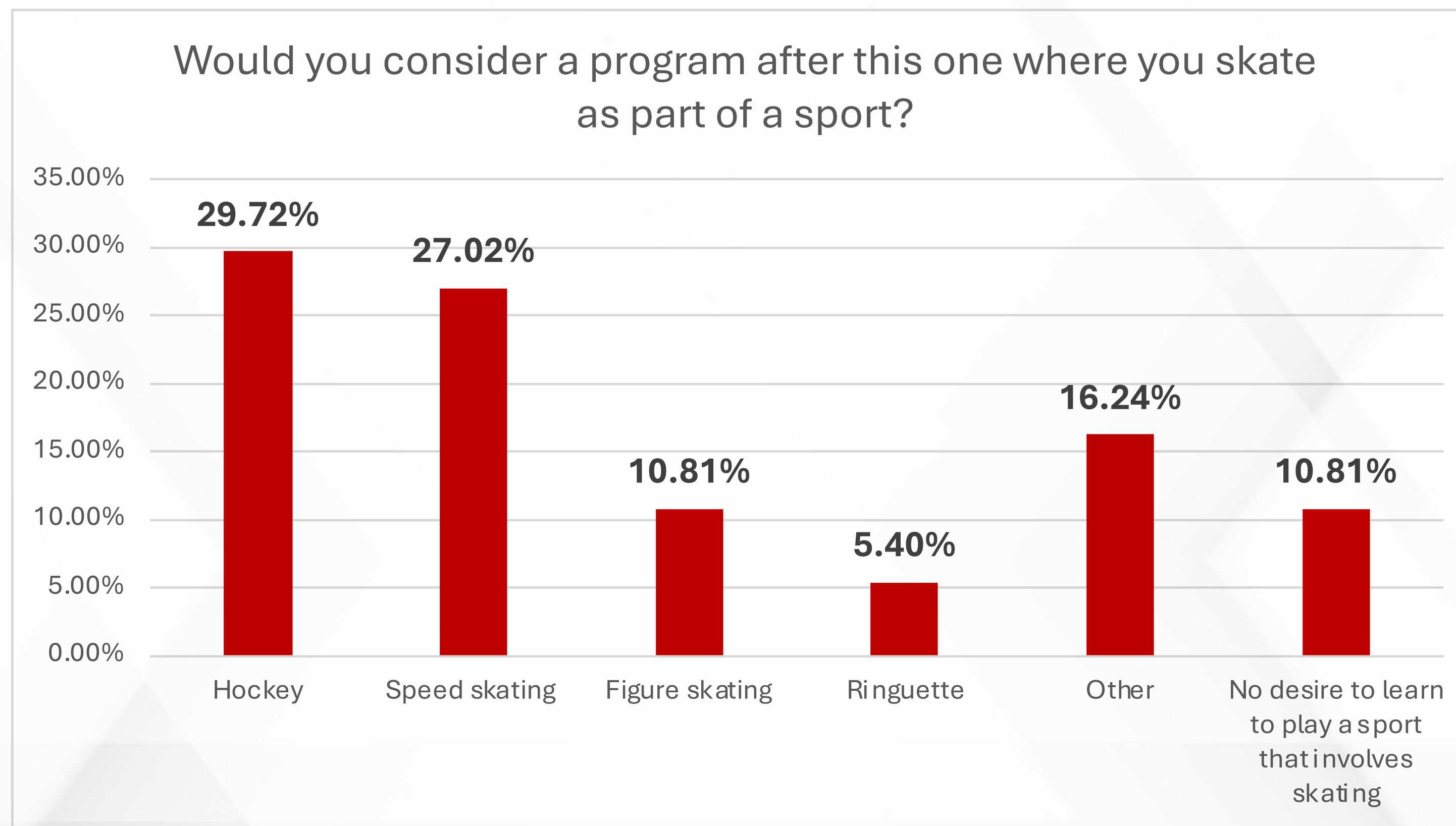
## OMHA / WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE PILOT SURVEY RESULTS



## OMHA / WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE PILOT SURVEY RESULTS



## OMHA / WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE PILOT SURVEY RESULTS



## FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS OF PARTICIPANTS

“  
“  
This is a great program with building the kids confidence to learn to skate. This program made my son less afraid and understood it's normal to fall, get back up and try again. Thank you.  
”

“  
“  
We are happy with all the way this program is organized.  
”

“  
“  
Thanks for the program - it has been fantastic. We now also go skating during the public skate on Saturdays'.  
”

“  
“  
Thanks so much for creating and introducing this program to our town!  
”

“  
“  
This program has been such a confidence builder. Very thankful to the coaches.  
”

“  
“  
Everyone was amazing at teaching how to skate thank you so much.  
”



## SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON THE PROGRAM

### 1. Confidence and Skill Development

- Many parents appreciated how the program helped children build confidence in learning to skate.
- *Example: "This program made my son less afraid and understood it's normal to fall, get back up, and try again. Thank you."*

### 2. Coaching and Support

- The coaches and volunteers received high praise for their enthusiasm and ability to engage with the children.
- *Example: "Everyone has been so helpful and kind with the kids and keeping things organized. The senior coaches are very encouraging, and the kids love their positivity!"*

### 3. Areas for Improvement: Individual Support for Beginners

- Some parents suggested that additional support for struggling skaters would be beneficial.
- *Example: "My son is still struggling to skate. It's his first time. I wish there was 1-on-1 support for beginners. Show them how to balance the skate, etc. Not very impressed."*

### 4. Program Structure & Organization

- Many appreciated the structured format of moving through stations and playing games.
- *Example: "The coaches are great, and we like going from station to station. The games are fun!"*

### 5. Requests for Future Opportunities

- Several parents expressed a desire for continued or expanded programs, such as house leagues or additional lessons.
- *Example: "My daughter thoroughly enjoyed the program and is hoping that there will be a house league or other program that she can join in January."*

## SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON FUN AND HIGHLIGHTS

The responses indicate that the majority of participants are enjoying the skating program and have found specific aspects particularly exciting and beneficial. Below are five key themes along with examples from the feedback:

### 1. Overall Enjoyment and Excitement

- Most participants expressed that they are having fun and look forward to the sessions.
- *Example: "Yes, a lot of fun. I look forward to this every week."*

### 2. Skill Development and Confidence Growth

- Many highlighted learning new skating techniques as a major achievement.
- *Example: "I learned to skate so much better than I did, and the coaches taught me to skate backwards too."*

### 3. Coaching and Engagement

- The friendliness, patience, and encouragement of the coaches were frequently mentioned as a highlight.
- *Example: "The engagement and friendliness of the coaches. You feel they're really invested and very kind and patient."*

### 4. Games and Fun Activities

- Participants enjoyed interactive games, races, and hockey-related drills.
- *Example: "Yes! The highlight is learning how to skate in a fun way and playing the games at the end of lessons."*

### 5. Favorite Moments: Speed and Challenges

- Some participants found excitement in going fast, competing in races, and practicing advanced movements.
- *Example: "Yes - highlight is 'going fast!'"*

## SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON SKATING PROGRESS BEFORE VS AFTER THE PROGRAM

The feedback demonstrates significant improvement in participants' skating skills and confidence since joining the program. Below are five key themes with examples from the responses:

### 1. From No Experience to Comfortable Skating

- Many participants started as complete beginners but can now skate independently.
- *Example: "Zero. I never skated before. I feel much better now."*

### 2. Gaining Confidence and Balance

- Several participants mentioned feeling more stable and confident on the ice.
- *Example: "Very shaky at first, but more confident now."*

### 3. Mastering New Skills

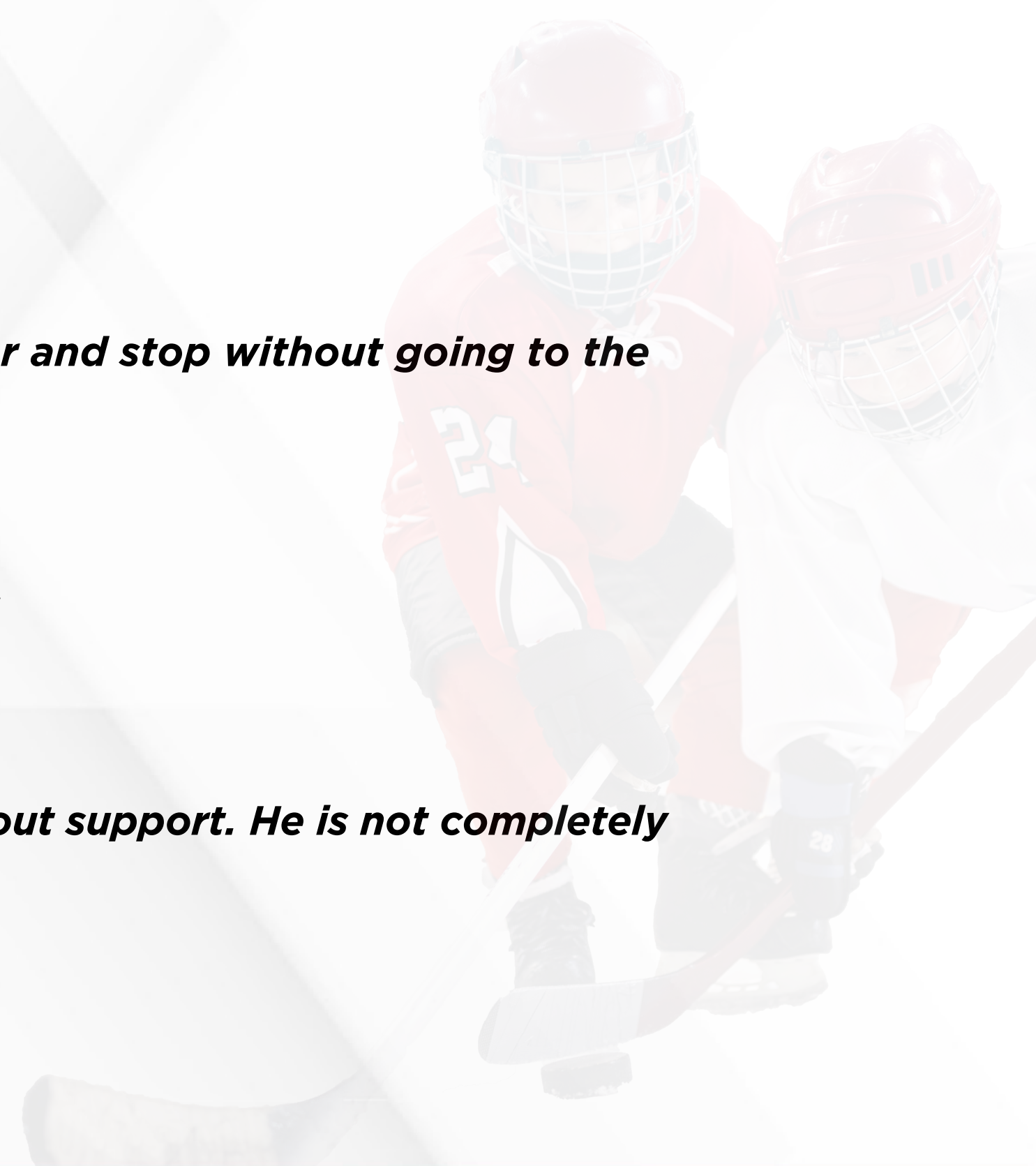
- Some skaters highlighted their ability to skate faster, stop, and even skate backwards.
- *Example: "Before I started this program, I was able to skate a bit, but now I can skate faster and stop without going to the boards. I can now skate backwards too!"*

### 4. Noticeable Progress Over Time

- Many parents and skaters acknowledged significant improvements over just a few weeks.
- *Example: "Not very good at all - in 6 weeks, she's learned so much. Amazing progression!"*

### 5. Still Learning but Improving

- Some participants are still developing their skills but have made noticeable strides.
- *Example: "My kid is completely new to skating. Today, he is able to manage on the rink without support. He is not completely skating yet, but he is trying to slide his legs and get grip."*



## COMMUNICATING THE NEXT STEPS (POST PROGRAM)

When your program concludes, it is essential to clearly communicate the next steps and opportunities available for participants. This should go beyond simply sending a registration email. Your communication should effectively highlight what hockey is, the joy it brings to its players, and its commitment to safety and inclusivity.

Be sure to include information on:

- **Try Hockey or Learn to Play programs**
- **Introductory hockey programs (e.g., First Shift, Esso Fun Days, etc.)**
- **Cost details**
- **Available funding opportunities**
- **Equipment banks or exchange programs**
- **Mainstream minor hockey association information**

Providing clear, engaging, and informative messaging will help ensure participants feel welcomed and encouraged to continue their hockey journey.

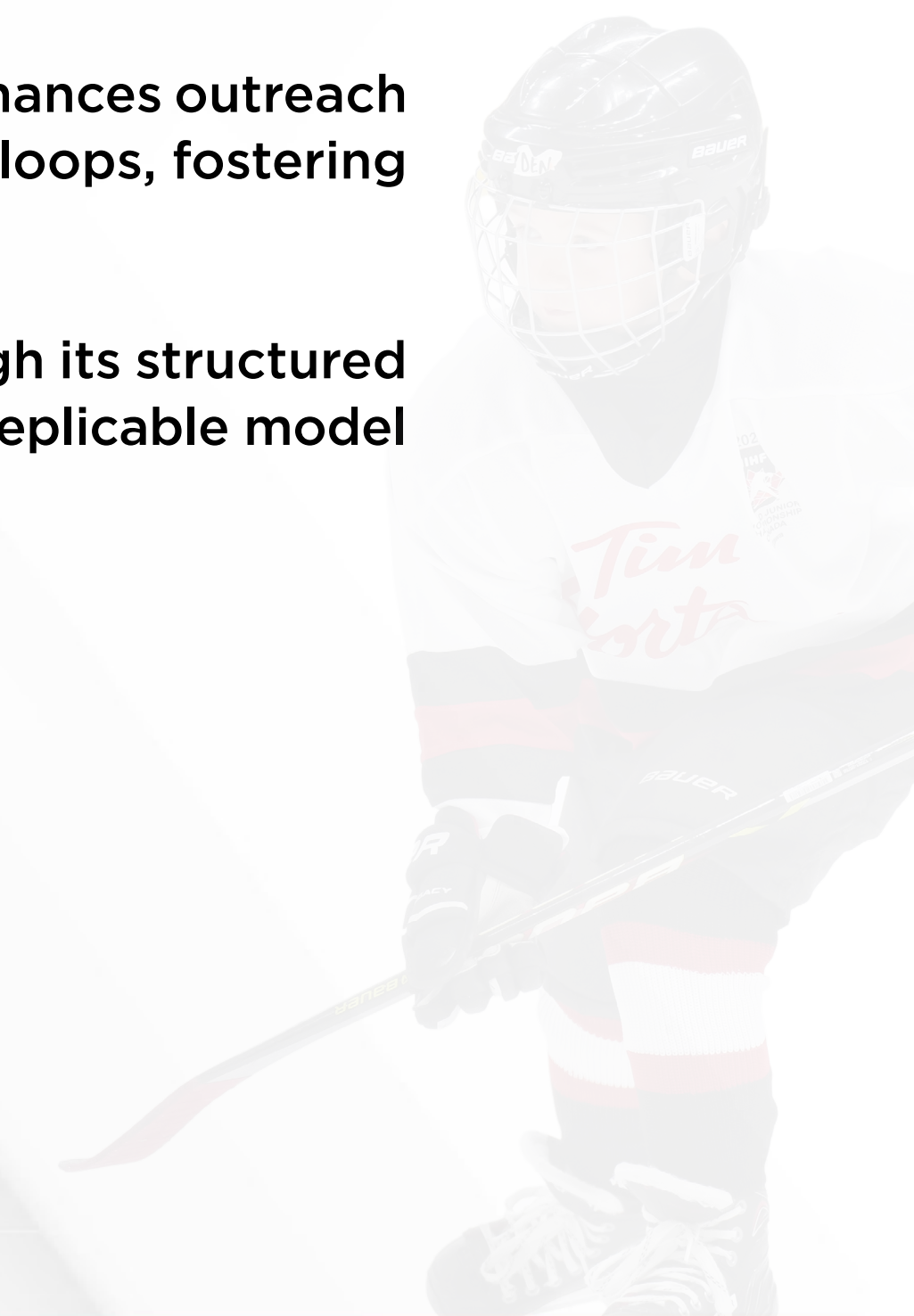


## SUMMARY

The OMHA's Learn to Skate initiative champions inclusivity, skill development, and community engagement by offering free skating sessions to children. Key components include thoughtful resource procurement, such as partnerships with local sports stores and gear donation drives, to lower barriers to participation.

A strong marketing strategy, leveraging platforms like Facebook and collaborations with local hockey associations, enhances outreach and visibility. The program's success is further ensured through progress tracking, participant surveys, and feedback loops, fostering continuous improvement.

By encouraging participants to join local skating and hockey clubs, the initiative builds lasting community ties. Through its structured approach, efficient resource management, and emphasis on inclusivity, the OMHA Learn to Skate Program serves as a replicable model for cultivating lifelong engagement in skating and hockey.



## KEYS TO SUCCESS

### 1. Clear Objectives and Vision

- Inclusion: Offer free skating lessons for children aged 8-14 to ensure accessibility.
- Skill Development: Focus on fundamental skating skills like stopping, gliding, and balance.
- Community Building: Create partnerships with local hockey associations and foster lasting connections.

### 2. Structured Program Development

- Plan sessions with clear weekly objectives
- Incorporate progressive skill-building and engaging activities like games and themes.
- Emphasize safety with proper equipment requirements and certified instructors.

### 3. Effective Resource Management

- Partner with local sports stores for equipment procurement and fittings.
- Encourage donations of used gear to reduce barriers for participants.
- Secure funding through sponsorships or grants, such as Hockey Canada's Pathway To Hockey insurance coverage program.  
[Click here](#) to find out more.

### 4. Comprehensive Marketing and Outreach

- Use social media (e.g., Facebook) to share updates, testimonials, and promotions.
- Develop community-focused campaigns
- Collaborate with local hockey associations to expand reach and encourage future participation.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

### 5. Engaging Orientation and Weekly Execution

- Begin with a kickoff session to explain goals, structure, and safety protocols.
- Incorporate fun elements like games, costumes, and certificates of completion to maintain enthusiasm.
- Track progress through skill milestones (e.g., moving from skating aids to independent gliding).

### 6. Consistent Volunteer and Instructor Support

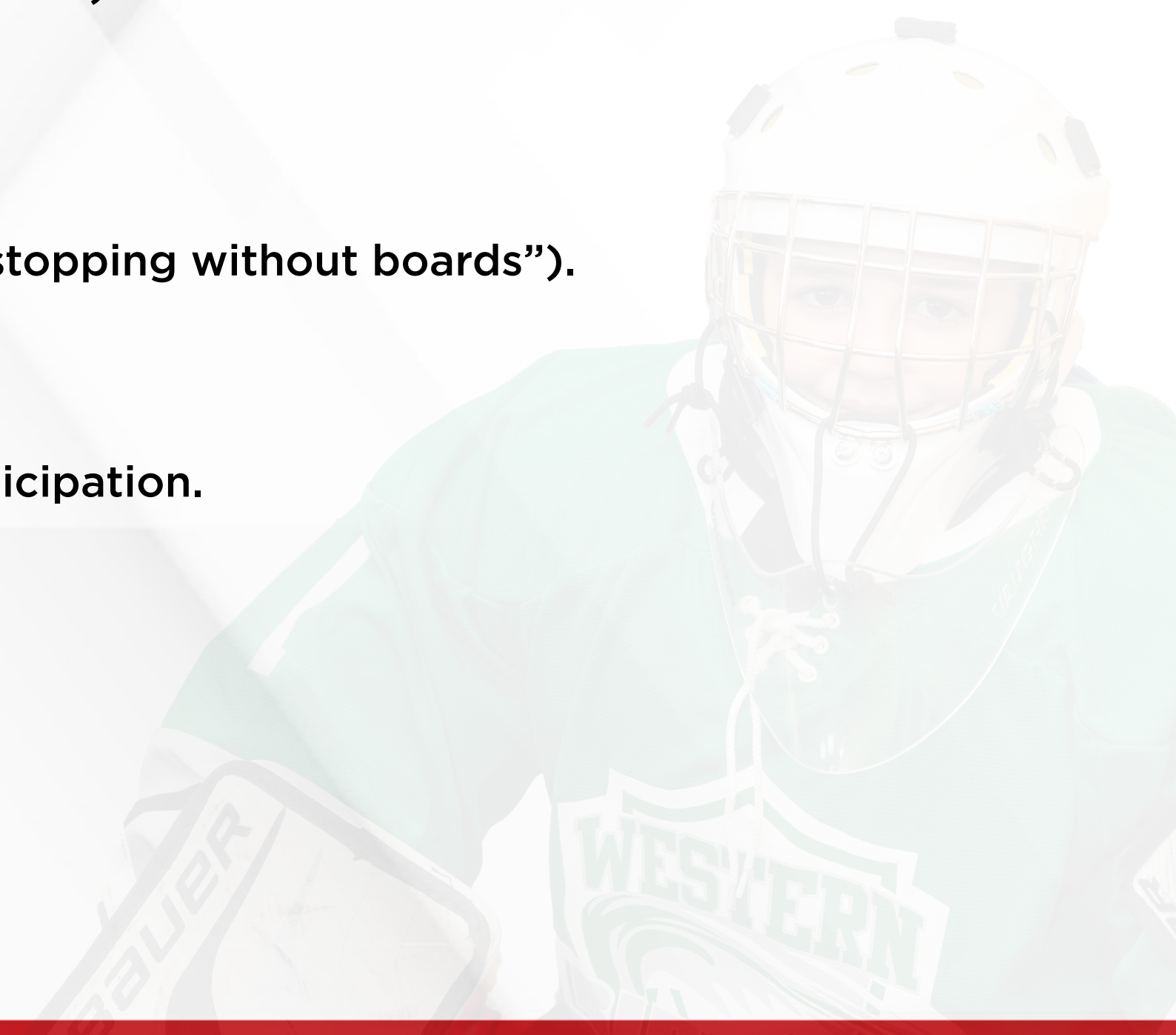
- Recruit volunteers using tools like sign-up sheets or Doodle polls.
- Ensure all instructors have proper certifications (e.g., Coach Level I, Respect in Sport, First Aid).
- Build a culture of support and encouragement for both participants and volunteers.

### 7. Measurement and Evaluation

- Use surveys to gather participant and parent feedback during and after the program.
- Track skill progression (e.g., “Before: Needed a skating aid. After: Skating backwards and stopping without boards”).

### 8. Sustainability and Growth

- Foster community ties by encouraging graduates to join local hockey associations.
- Introduce certificates of completion to recognize achievements and encourage return participation.
- Continuously improve the program based on feedback and evolving community needs.



## QUESTION OR SUPPORT

If you have any questions or require additional support, please don't hesitate to reach out:

Have a program that's making a difference in your hockey community?

Use our submission form to share your story!

[CLICK HERE!](#)

- **PROVINCIAL MEMBER:** Contact your provincial representative for localized guidance and program assistance.
- **HOCKEY CANADA:** Email [gr@hockeycanada.ca](mailto:gr@hockeycanada.ca) for general inquiries, resources, and support.

We're here to help make your program a success!