



SUBMISSION DEADLINE NOVEMBER 15TH

THE CHALLENGE

The way fans interact with and consume hockey is evolving, spanning across generations. As the NHL and Clubs look to engage with the next generation of youth fans and players, the league is continually looking to shape how we think about future growth. We are seeking innovative strategies and emerging trends that will help us connect with new audiences and deepen relationships with current fans.

THESIS QUESTION

How would you make the NHL brand more relevant through immersive experiences with current fans and new audiences who currently do not have a relationship with the league and hockey?

Secondly, while developing and deepening brand avidity and engagement with the NHL and its Clubs, it is imperative to retain these customers into the CRM ecosystem beyond the first touch point. How would you build a retention strategy to support the creation of the framework above?

INNOVATION PILLARS

1. **Technology Experience**
2. **Customer Experience** (In-Game and At Home)
3. **Enhancing Existing Programs:** The Mobile Museum and Education Experience

PANEL OF JUDGES

Submissions will be evaluated by a panel of judges from the NHL, NHLPA and industry leaders, who will be looking for the most innovative, impactful and sustainable strategies to grow and deepen the NHL brand.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

- **Be a Game Changer:** Shape the future of hockey fandom.
- **Network:** Connect with industry professionals and fellow innovators.
- **Recognition:** Gain visibility and recognition within the NHL/NHLPA community.
- **Prizes:** Compete for exciting rewards and opportunities.

HOW TO ENTER

- **Eligibility:** The Competition is open to full-time and part-time students currently enrolled in an accredited participating university or college in Ontario, Canada. A participating university or college is one which has been invited to take part in the Competition by or on behalf of the Sponsors.
- **Submission:** Present your idea addressing the thesis questions and one or more of the innovation pillars.
- **Deadline:** November 15th, 2024
- **In-Person Final Pitch Day:** The top 6 teams will be invited to present their ideas at the prestigious **Hockey Hall of Fame on January 29th.**

GET STARTED

1. **Form a Team:** Collaborate with peers to brainstorm and develop your ideas. No more than 4 students per team.
2. **Research:** Dive into the current trends and challenges within the sports and entertainment industry.
3. **Innovate:** Think outside the box and develop a comprehensive strategic plan and business idea to solve for one or more of the pillars of innovations.
4. **Submit:** Follow the submission guidelines and submit a written report or presentation by November 15th: [here](#)

SUBMIT HERE

QUESTIONS?

Please contact us at [here](#) or visit our
Frequently Asked Questions [page](#).

TECHNOLOGY EXPERIENCE

Technology driven platforms have become ubiquitous as part of our everyday lives- changing consumer behaviour, the way we communicate and interact with the world around us. These shifts in technology have undoubtedly influenced the sports and entertainment landscape, transforming from how players are training, venues are operationalizing, teams are engaging their fan base and how businesses are making decisions.

Question: How can we leverage technology to connect and bring in new youth hockey fans by creating or utilizing an existing platform/app/digital community. How would you execute this platform?

Sub-questions:

- What features would the platform/app include to attract and engage youth?
- How would you market this platform/app to ensure its success?
- What partnerships or collaborations could enhance the reach and effectiveness of this technology?





INNOVATION PILLARS

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The Customer experience is a fundamental lifeline to sustaining sports fandom, increasing avidity, and attracting new fans. This includes providing engagement avenues for interconnected experiences both in-game and at home. It is hard to compare the first-hand experience of watching an NHL game live in-arena shared with thousands of other passionate fans, yet the reality is most fans watch their favourite team in the comfort of their own home.

In-Game Experience

Question: What does an ideal fan engagement experience look like in the arena? Consider branding, entertainment, game presentation, food/beverages, ticket prices, and timing.

Sub-questions:

- What new forms of entertainment or interactive elements could be introduced?
- How can the overall atmosphere and environment be improved to create lasting memories and repeat attendance?

At-Home Experience

Question: How can we improve and enable new opportunities for connection to provide a more interactive and personalized viewing experience? Consider marketing, digital channels, platforms, and programming.

Sub-questions:

- How can we make at-home viewing more interactive?
- How can digital channels and platforms be used to personalize the fan experience?
- What type of content and programming would attract new audiences and retain current fans?

QUESTIONS?

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INNOVATION PILLARS

ENHANCING EXISTING PROGRAMS

Education Experience

Schools provide a vehicle to meet kids where they are at while broadening reach to connect and engage with the next generations. While accessing education institutions comes with a degree of legal ramifications, the opportunities for engagement, programming building must be considered while creating a unified approach to building fandom.

Question: How would you reimagine or enhance an integrated hockey-themed strategy or school-based program to more deeply connect with students within the classroom and beyond?

Sub-questions:

- Should STEM programming be the sole focus?
- Would you reimagine their existing [NHL Future Goals program](#) or build an entire new way to engage students through schools?
- What specific age-appropriate programs or initiatives would you implement to engage students?
- How could a sports-based curriculum for school build fandom?
- How do you keep students engaged beyond and continue to connect to the NHL and Club brand/ecosystem?

Mobile Tour Experience

Currently, the NHL showcases the [United by Hockey](#) mobile museum tour, a free fan experience that celebrates hockey's trailblazers, changemakers, and business leaders spanning various demographics. Learn more about the United by Hockey initiative [here](#).

Question: Thinking about the concept of the mobile tour experience holistically, how would you envision the future state?

Sub-questions:

- Would you continue to invest in the United by Hockey Mobile Museum by advancing the current platform to create greater levels attached to the experience
- How would you enhance or reimagine the experience?
- Would you take a difference approach and consider redesigning a brand-new mobile truck tour?
- Would you create an entirely brand-new experiential activation that engages, educates and inspires individuals?

QUESTIONS?

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Eligibility:

- **Who Can Enter:** The Competition is open to full-time and part-time students currently enrolled in a participating university or college in Ontario, Canada. A participating university or college is one which has been invited to take part in the Competition by or on behalf of the Sponsors.
- **Team Composition:** Each team must consist of a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of four (4) students. All students on a team must be enrolled at the same participating university or college. A student may not be on more than one (1) team.
- **Age Requirement:** All participants must be at least eighteen (18) years of age at the time of entry.
 - See full contest rules and regulations: [here](#)

Submission Format: Written proposal (max 10 pages) and presentation (max 10 slides)

- **Optional:**
 - A video pitch (maximum five (5) minutes) in .mov format uploaded as part of the submission (YouTube or similar video sharing websites are not permitted)
 - Any additional supporting materials

Report/Presentation Guidelines:

- A written proposal or presentation addressing the following two (2) thesis questions:
 - How would you make the NHL® brand more relevant across immersive experiences with current fans and new audiences who currently do not have a relationship with the league and hockey?
 - Additionally, while developing and deepening brand avidity and engagement with the NHL and its member clubs, how would you build a retention strategy to support the creation of the framework above?
- A focus for the thesis questions must address at least one (1) of the following pillars of innovation:
 - Technology Experience
 - Customer Experience
 - Enhancing Existing Programs: The Mobile Museum and Education Experience
- Outline how the impact and solution will be measured and could be implemented

Office Hours: to help answer any questions you may have we will be hosting 2 virtual office hours, sign up below.

- **October 17th: 12pm-1pm EST:** sign up [here](#)
- **October 18th: 12pm-1pm EST:** sign up [here](#)

Submission Deadline: November 15th, 2024

- 20 teams will be selected by November 29th to move on to the semi-finals

In-Person Final Pitch Day: The top 6 teams will be invited to present their ideas at the prestigious **Hockey Hall of Fame on January 29th**, in front of a panel of industry leaders, providing an incredible opportunity to showcase your innovations on a grand stage.

- In advance of January 29th, finalists will receive mentorship, pitch coaching and support to prepare them for pitch day

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Innovation and Creativity:** Originality and inventiveness of the idea.
- **Feasibility and Implementation:** Practicality and potential for real-world application within the NHL and Clubs.
- **Potential Impact on the NHL:** Potential to enhance fan engagement, grow the sport, generate revenue and/or improve operations.
 - The impact must be measurable and sustainable
- **Presentation and Communication Skills:** Clarity, efficacy, and effectiveness of the proposal and presentation.

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