

Strategic Plan & Execution Plan

2025 - 2028



Greater Toronto Hockey League



“This Strategic Plan is our contract with every child in the GTA who dreams of lacing up skates, every parent seeking transparency, every volunteer giving their Saturday mornings, and every sponsor investing in community. Read the initiative that speaks to you. Volunteer. Provide feedback. Hold us accountable at the Town-Hall. Together, we will keep Toronto’s rinks alive with the joy of the game - for every kid, in every neighbourhood.”

Table of Contents

1. Message from the Executive Director and Board Chair.....	3
2. About the Greater Toronto Hockey League.....	4
3. Mission, Vision, and Values.....	5
4. Strategic Environmental Scan.....	6
<i>External Environment</i>	6
<i>Internal Environment</i>	7
5. Strategic Pillars.....	9
<i>Trust</i>	9
<i>Belonging</i>	10
<i>Achievement</i>	10
<i>Growth</i>	10
6. From Strategy to Execution.....	11
<i>Strategic Enablers & Capabilities</i>	11
<i>High Level Roadmap – NOW, NEXT, and LATER</i>	12
<i>Execution Playbooks – Standard Operating Procedures</i>	13
<i>Committees – Accountability & Support</i>	14
<i>Performance Measurement and Accountability</i>	14
9. Risks and Mitigation.....	18
10. Appendices.....	20
<i>Stakeholder Map</i>	20

1. Message from the Executive Director and Board Chair

We are pleased and excited to present the Greater Toronto Hockey League's (GTHL) Strategic Plan for 2025–2028. This strategic plan marks a significant milestone as we chart a clear, ambitious path forward, embracing our heritage while adapting to contemporary challenges and opportunities within youth sports.

Our league has proudly served the Greater Toronto Area hockey community since 1911, fostering a passion for hockey, building character, and developing leaders on and off the ice. Over the years, our dedicated players, parents, volunteers, coaches, officials, and staff have collectively contributed to making the GTHL a beacon of community sport excellence. This strategic plan is designed to reinforce these strengths and address areas for growth and improvement.

Through extensive consultations with stakeholders (See Fig 3. In Appendix), including players, parents, club and organization representatives, coaches, volunteers, community partners, and external experts, we have identified four strategic pillars: Trust, Belonging, Achievement and Growth. Each pillar has clear objectives and tangible initiatives designed to enhance our operational excellence, inclusivity, transparency, financial sustainability, and long-term viability.

Trust is foundational to our success, and we are deeply committed to enhancing governance, transparency, and accountability across the league. Belonging underscores our resolve to continuously create a more inclusive environment, ensuring every player, regardless of background, feels welcomed, valued, and supported. Achievement and Growth reflect our dedication to continuously improve hockey development programs, expand opportunities for participation, and elevate the overall experience for our athletes and volunteers.

As we embark on this strategic journey, our vision remains clear and compelling—to provide enriching, inclusive hockey experiences that foster lifelong participation, community engagement, and personal growth. We invite all members of the GTHL community to actively participate in this strategic plan's implementation, recognizing that together, our collective efforts will achieve extraordinary results.

Thank you for your ongoing support, trust, and commitment to the Greater Toronto Hockey League. We look forward to working collaboratively to bring this exciting vision to life and ensure the continued success and impact of our league for generations to come.

Respectfully,



Scott Oakman
Executive Director, GTHL



Donald West
Chair, Board of Directors, GTHL

2. About the Greater Toronto Hockey League

Established in 1911, the Greater Toronto Hockey League (GTHL) stands as one of the largest and most influential amateur hockey leagues globally, proudly serving the Greater Toronto Area's diverse and vibrant communities. Over more than a century, the GTHL has evolved significantly, continuously expanding its reach, enhancing its offerings, and solidifying its reputation as a leader in youth hockey.

Today, the GTHL encompasses 36 community house league organizations comprising over 1,800 teams, 52 competitive Clubs with over 500 teams, 4 Hockey Canada Accredited Schools, two Divisions, which support more than 40,000 participants including players ranging in age from under 7 to under 21. These participants represent a wide spectrum of backgrounds and skill levels, from recreational beginners to highly competitive athletes aspiring toward professional careers. With an extensive network of committed organizations, dedicated coaches, volunteers, and officials, the GTHL provides a structured and supportive environment that encourages athletic excellence, personal growth, and community participation.

Governance is at the core of the GTHL's operations, overseen by a robust Board of Directors supported by specialized committees. These committees, including Governance, Risk Management, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Community Engagement, Development, Competition, Finance, and Audit, are integral to the league's strategic and operational decision-making processes. This structured governance model ensures that the league remains accountable, transparent, and responsive to the evolving needs of its stakeholders.

The GTHL places significant emphasis on player development, emphasizing skill acquisition, sportsmanship, and leadership both on and off the ice. Our league is renowned for producing talented athletes who progress to higher levels of hockey, including junior leagues, collegiate programs, and professional organizations worldwide. More importantly, the GTHL is deeply committed to fostering personal development and lifelong skills, including teamwork, perseverance, respect, and community engagement.

Community involvement is a cornerstone of the GTHL's identity. The league actively collaborates with municipalities, schools, local businesses, and community organizations to create accessible hockey opportunities, support inclusive participation, and enrich community life. These partnerships help sustain and enhance local hockey infrastructure, promote inclusive participation, and ensure hockey remains accessible and appealing to all.

As the GTHL moves forward, our strategic plan aims to build upon our rich heritage, leverage our extensive resources, and continually adapt to the changing landscape of youth sports. We remain committed to fostering an environment where every participant, family, volunteer, and community partner feels valued and supported.

3. Mission, Vision, and Values



INCLUSIVITY: We celebrate diversity and strive to make hockey accessible to everyone by adopting an equitable approach that removes barriers, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status.

SAFETY: We prioritize all participants' physical and mental well-being by ensuring a safe and supportive environment.

INTEGRITY: We commit to fairness, honesty, respect, and accountability in all our operations, fostering trust within our community, on and off the ice.

EXCELLENCE: We strive for excellence in all our activities, encouraging dedication, sportsmanship, hard work, and the pursuit of personal and team achievements.

COMMUNITY: We foster a sense of belonging and community through hockey, enhancing social connections and collaboration, recognizing that collective efforts yield greater success and contribute to the well-being of our communities.

DEVELOPMENT: We focus on our participants' holistic development, imparting life skills that extend beyond the rink and supporting their growth into well-rounded individuals.

4. Strategic Environmental Scan

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The external environmental scan, supported by detailed interviews with sector leaders from organizations including other youth hockey leagues in Canada, and other youth sports in Canada, as well as industry advisors, highlights key themes shaping the youth sports landscape. Overall, youth sports face shifting participation trends, driven by demographic changes, evolving family dynamics, and socio-economic factors. A comparative analysis with North American youth leagues highlights increasing demand for transparency, inclusive programs, and adaptable governance structures.

Governance And Organizational Structure

Interviewees emphasized modernizing governance with professionally managed boards focused on policymaking and clearly delineating strategic roles from operational responsibilities. Other sports leagues (Hockey & non-Hockey in multiple provinces) exemplify this transition, advocating for professional expertise over traditional volunteer-based boards.

Player-Centered Development And Safesport

There is a unanimous emphasis on SafeSport, stressing concussion protocols, maltreatment management, and zero-tolerance policies. Player experience and fun are increasingly prioritized over strict competition, especially for younger age groups, promoting longer participation and better skill development through formats like small-ice games and flexible schedules.

Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion (Dei)

Organizations strive for inclusive representation in their governance and operations. Initiatives include actively supporting underrepresented groups such as equity-deserving Indigenous communities, and para-athletes, alongside addressing the significant gender gap in coaching roles. Accessibility, affordability, and cultural inclusivity are fundamental.

Innovation, Technology, And Shared Services

Sector leaders support shared infrastructure and services for efficiency, transparency, and cost-effectiveness. Emphasis on data-driven decision-making and digital transformation is strong, with projects like “Open Ice” optimizing facility utilization through advanced scheduling and AI-driven analytics.

Strategic Positioning and Growth Opportunities

Recreational hockey is identified as a primary growth area, demanding more flexible, affordable participation formats. Recommendations include addressing fragmentation through strategic amalgamation and partnerships. The branding focus is shifting towards highlighting the core values of fun, participation, and skill development, moving away from legacy governance perceptions.

These insights provide a robust foundation for GTHL's strategic priorities and underscore the importance of intentional planning, modern governance, inclusivity, and innovation.

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

An in-depth review of the GTHL's internal committees and structures provides valuable insights into external trends and environmental factors that shape the youth hockey landscape. These committees—including Officiating Development, Finance, Legacy Fund Management, Governance, DEI, Membership, and Risk Management—highlight critical areas influencing external operational effectiveness and strategic alignment with broader community expectations. In addition to reviewing our committee mandates and structures, we conducted multiple stakeholder interviews (See Fig 3. In Appendix), member forums, and strategy sessions. We also conducted several surveys to gauge the wants, needs, concerns and experiences of multiple stakeholders, including player parents.

Governance and Policy

The Governance Committee emphasizes establishing robust frameworks to ensure transparent and accountable leadership. This includes enhancing policies, procedures, and board composition to meet best practices, aligning closely with evolving stakeholder expectations and regulatory requirements.

Clubs and teams have expressed a need for a better balance between governance & policy and the administrative overhead of running a club – while continuously improving transparency and accountability. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

The DEI Committee underscores the necessity for inclusive representation within governance structures and on-ice activities. Initiatives aim to foster an environment reflecting community diversity and promoting accessibility and fairness, directly responding to societal expectations for inclusive participation.

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Financial Stewardship

Financial and Audit Committees prioritize fiscal responsibility, transparency, and effective resource management. By regularly reviewing budgetary practices, investment strategies, and financial controls, the league positions itself to sustainably support growth initiatives and adapt to economic fluctuations.

Risk Management and SafeSport

The Safety and Risk Management Committee is dedicated to proactively managing risks, including player safety, governance transparency, and reputational concerns. Emphasis is placed on stringent SafeSport compliance, effective grievance mechanisms, and consistent enforcement of standards to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all participants.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Committees such as the Legacy Fund Management and Membership Advisory Council facilitate active engagement with community and stakeholder groups (See Fig 3. In Appendix). Their efforts focus on fostering productive relationships, soliciting input, and ensuring the league's actions are reflective of community needs and expectations.

Parent and team surveys reveal a desire for better access to budgetary information, clear complaint resolution mechanisms, and increased recreational opportunities.

These internal structures and their outward-facing roles provide critical perspectives on the external environment, highlighting areas such as governance modernization, inclusive participation, fiscal prudence, risk management, and meaningful community engagement as vital elements in shaping the future direction of the GTHL.

5. Strategic Pillars

As a result of our internal and external environmental scans, in addition to multiple forums, meetings, interviews, and surveys, we have designed four fundamental pillars that hold up our mission & vision, help express our values and organize our efforts to execute on our promises.

VISION	To empower, inspire, innovate and provide hockey experiences that foster growth, inclusion, and excellence for all participants within the Greater Toronto Area.					
MISSION	To be a beacon of community engagement and athletic excellence, cultivating a passion for hockey and nurturing the personal development of every participant.					
VALUES	INCLUSIVITY We celebrate diversity and strive to make hockey accessible to <u>everyone</u> .	SAFETY We prioritize all participants' physical and mental well-being.	INTEGRITY We commit to fairness, honesty, respect, and accountability in all our operations.	EXCELLENCE We encourage dedication, sportsmanship, hard work, and the pursuit of personal and team achievements.	COMMUNITY We foster a sense of belonging and enhancing connections.	DEVELOPMENT We focus on our participants' holistic growth and well-roundedness.
PILLARS	TRUST	BELONGING		ACHIEVEMENT		GROWTH

TRUST

Objective: Ensure safety, integrity, and ethical conduct by promoting respect, fairness, and accountability within hockey environments. This pillar safeguards the physical, psychological, and cultural well-being of all stakeholders. Trust takes precedence as the foundational pillar, emphasizing safety and integrity as the bedrock of the GTHL's mission.

Key Themes: Safety, well-being, respect, and ethical oversight. Trust is also built through transparency.

Alignment to vision & values: Supports Safety and Integrity in the values, as well as the strategic category of "Promote Safety and Well-being."

Connection to Mission: Ensures a safe and respectful environment, fostering fairness and accountability, as emphasized in cultivating passion for hockey and the well-being of participants.

BELONGING

Objective: Focus on fostering a sense of inclusion, diversity, equity, and community across all aspects of hockey. This pillar emphasizes creating an environment where every participant feels welcome, valued, and part of a greater whole.

Key Themes: DEI initiatives, representation, community-building, and participant retention.

Alignment to vision & values: Directly reflects Inclusivity and Community in the values. Also supports the strategic category of “Improved Culture, Inclusivity, and Diversity.”

Connection to Mission: Encourages community engagement and a sense of belonging, key to inspiring inclusion and accessibility within hockey experiences.

ACHIEVEMENT

Objective: Drive excellence in leadership, player development, and competition. This pillar emphasizes setting high standards for personal and organizational growth, both on and off the ice.

Key Themes: Talent development, competitive balance, and leadership.

Alignment to vision & values: Tied to Excellence in the values and aligns with the mission’s focus on personal and athletic development. It also supports “Enhance Brand and Reputation.”

Connection to Mission: Focuses on cultivating individual and team achievements, driving athletic excellence while maintaining sportsmanship and dedication.

GROWTH

Objective: Build the organization’s brand, reputation, and long-term sustainability through financial stability, operational efficiency, and strategic innovations and alternatives. This pillar focuses on creating a thriving future for GTHL.

Key Themes: Branding, financial management, and long-term strategy.

Alignment to vision & values: Reflects Development in the values and aligns with “Enhance Brand and Reputation” and “Strengthen Community Engagement” in the strategic categories.

Connection to Mission: Supports long-term organizational growth and community collaboration to nurture holistic personal development and hockey’s sustainability.

6. From Strategy to Execution

STRATEGIC ENABLERS & CAPABILITIES

As part of our strategic planning process, we gathered over 100 individual business capabilities identified by stakeholders across the organization. They included people, process and technology wish list items. To make these actionable and aligned with our broader transformation goals, we organized them into 15 overarching capability groupings.

The chart below maps each grouping against the four strategic pillars, highlighting where each set of capabilities contributes to our enterprise priorities. It also illustrates the strategic alignment of our future capability investments and helps ensure that our roadmap is grounded in the areas that will drive the greatest organizational impact.

Capability/Pillar	Trust	Belonging	Achievement	Growth
DEI Strategy - communications		X		X
DEI Strategy - culture		X	X	
Financial Management	X			
Flexible Programming		X	X	X
Governance Efficiency	X	X		X
Hockey Culture/The Game	X	X		
Long-range planning				X
Marketing & Comms Programs	X	X		X
Player Experience	X	X	X	X
Policy Improvement	X			
Process Improvement	X	X		X
Risk Management	X	X		X
Shared Services	X	X	X	X
Talent Pathway support		X	X	X
Transparency	X	X		
Volunteer support				X

Figure 1 – Capability Groupings

HIGH LEVEL ROADMAP – NOW, NEXT, AND LATER

To turn strategy into action, we have prioritized the most critical business capabilities and organized them into a high-level sequencing framework: NOW, NEXT, and LATER. These categories reflect the logical progression of our transformation journey, allowing us to focus on what’s most important today while maintaining visibility into what comes after. While this roadmap does not assign fixed dates, it provides a directional view of how we intend to realize our strategic goals over the life of the plan.

The NOW group includes capabilities that are either already in motion or deemed foundational to enable further progress. The NEXT category represents initiatives that build on early successes and require coordination or preconditions established in the NOW phase. The LATER group captures longer-term capabilities that are aspirational or dependent on prior work. This phased approach enables us to manage complexity, allocate resources effectively, and remain adaptive as priorities evolve.

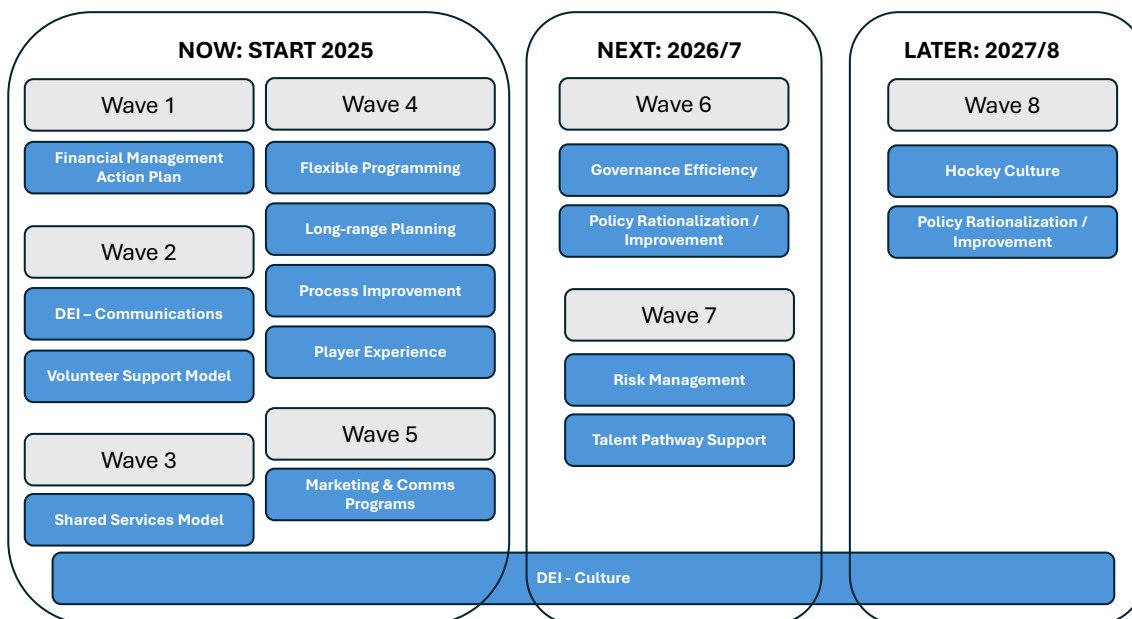


Figure 2 – High Level Roadmap

Throughout execution, we will rely on our existing governance committees to maintain alignment, manage interdependencies, and ensure accountability. These committees will play a key role in evaluating readiness, sequencing decisions, and addressing change management needs. The roadmap that follows offers a flexible but focused guide for progressing from vision to value — one step at a time.

EXECUTION PLAYBOOKS – STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Playbooks are the way to document, communicate, and continuously-improve the execution of projects and programs that help us deliver on our strategy.

We are developing playbooks that mirror our roadmap and help us align on executing our strategic plan:

• NOW

1. Financial Management Action Plan
2. DEI Strategy & Execution Playbook
3. Shared Services for Clubs Feasibility Study/Playbook
4. Entity Transformation Playbook
5. Player Experience Playbook
6. Marketing & Comms Playbook

• NEXT

1. Risk Management Framework (ERM)
2. Leadership Development Playbook

A typical playbook has the following outline:

Table of Contents	
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Guiding Principles for Shared Services Exploration.....	1
3. Translating Strategy into Action.....	2
Strategic Objective:.....	2
Core Questions:.....	2
Prioritization Criteria:.....	2
4. Governance and Accountability.....	2
5. Shared Services Feasibility Toolkit.....	3
Phase 1: Needs Assessment.....	3
Phase 2: Options Analysis (Build, Buy, Partner).....	3
Phase 3: Cost-Benefit and Risk Analysis.....	3
Phase 4: Pilot Design and Governance.....	3
Phase 5: Recommendation and Roadmap.....	3
6. Performance Measurement & Continuous Improvement.....	3
7. Communications and Change Management.....	4
8. Shared Services Menu (Draft Candidate Areas).....	4
9. Case Example (Illustrative Walkthrough).....	5
10. Appendices & Resources.....	5

COMMITTEES – ACCOUNTABILITY & SUPPORT

Committees are essential to the GTHL’s ability to execute its strategic priorities. They serve as the backbone of operational delivery, ensuring that ideas and initiatives move from planning to action. Composed largely of dedicated volunteers, these committees provide the structure and accountability necessary for staff, board members, and the broader GTHL community to stay aligned and focused. Whether advancing player safety, improving league operations, or driving equity and inclusion, committees are where much of the real work happens—turning shared goals into measurable outcomes.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) selected for this strategic plan are designed to help the GTHL measure progress, remain transparent, and stay accountable to its stakeholders—including players, parents, clubs, staff, and the broader hockey community. Each KPI is directly tied to one or more of the League’s strategic priorities and strategic pillars. These metrics provide a clear and consistent way to track how well the GTHL is delivering on its commitments, identify areas for improvement, and guide decision-making over the life of the plan. By establishing measurable outcomes, the League reinforces its commitment to continuous improvement and responsible governance.

Pillar 1: Trust

Governance and Transparency

- **Board Effectiveness Score:** Annual self-assessment survey results measuring clarity of roles, decision-making effectiveness, and satisfaction among board members.
- **Compliance Rate:** Percentage adherence to governance policies and procedures.
- **Transparency Rating:** Stakeholder survey scores rating the clarity and accessibility of league communications and financial reports.

Risk Management

- **SafeSport Compliance:** Percentage of teams/clubs compliant with SafeSport protocols.
 - **Incident Response Time:** Average time taken from reporting to resolution of grievances/incidents.
 - **Risk Audits:** Number and outcomes of annual risk management audits conducted.
-

Pillar 2: Belonging

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

- **Representation Metrics:** Percentage of underrepresented groups (players, coaches, referees, board members) compared to community demographics.

- **DEI Training Completion Rate:** Percentage of staff, coaches, and volunteers completing mandatory DEI training annually.
- **Inclusivity Satisfaction Scores:** Annual survey scores assessing how welcome, included, and respected players and families feel within the GTHL.

Community Engagement

- **Community Programs:** Number and reach of community programs or partnerships implemented annually.
 - **Participant Feedback Scores:** Satisfaction ratings from players, families, and community partners regarding engagement initiatives.
-

Pillar 3: Achievement

Player and Organizational Development

- **Player Retention Rate:** Year-over-year retention rates across age groups and competitive levels.
- **Coach Development Completion Rate:** Percentage of coaches completing advanced training or certifications each year.
- **Program Effectiveness:** Participant satisfaction and improvement ratings from surveys assessing player skills, enjoyment, and development experiences.

Expansion of Opportunities

- **Recreational Program Enrollment:** Annual percentage increase in recreational hockey participation.
 - **Flexible Programming Metrics:** Number and variety of flexible hockey formats offered (e.g., shinny, drop-in, short-season leagues).
-

Pillar 4: Growth

Financial Transparency and Stewardship

- **Budget Adherence:** Percentage variance of actual financial performance against budget targets.
- **Financial Reporting Timeliness:** Number of days from month-end to distribution of financial reports to stakeholders.
- **Stakeholder Financial Transparency Rating:** Survey results measuring satisfaction with financial transparency.

Revenue Diversification

- **Revenue Growth:** Annual percentage increase in revenues from sponsorships, grants, donations, and partnerships.
 - **New Revenue Streams:** Number and proportion of revenues derived from newly established sources each year.
-

Cross-Pillar Strategic Enablers

Technology and Digital Transformation

- **System Adoption Rate:** Percentage of teams/clubs consistently using the centralized league management platform.
- **Stakeholder Satisfaction with Technology:** Survey scores reflecting satisfaction with league technology and digital resources.

Infrastructure and Facilities

- **Facility Utilization Rate:** Percentage of ice time utilization across GTHL-affiliated facilities.
- **Facility Condition Index:** Annual review scoring the quality and safety of facilities.

People and Culture

- **Employee/Volunteer Engagement Scores:** Annual survey results measuring satisfaction, morale, and commitment among GTHL employees and volunteers.
 - **Professional Development Participation:** Percentage of staff completing professional development or training annually.
-

Reporting and Communication

Internal Reporting

- **Quarterly Internal Reports:** Regular updates provided to the Board and staff detailing progress on KPIs and strategic objectives.
- **Annual Strategic Review:** Comprehensive review assessing progress, identifying areas of improvement, and revising strategies as necessary.

External Reporting

- **Annual Public Report:** Transparent annual report shared publicly via the GTHL website summarizing strategic plan achievements, financial health, and stakeholder survey results.
- **Stakeholder Forums:** Regular stakeholder meetings or forums for direct feedback and updates on strategic initiatives and KPIs.

9. Risks and Mitigation

As the GTHL advances its strategic priorities, it must navigate a range of risks that could impact the League's ability to deliver on its commitments. These risks span operational, financial, reputational, and strategic domains. A proactive and transparent approach to risk identification and mitigation is essential to sustaining the trust of stakeholders and ensuring the League's long-term viability.

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES:

1. Volunteer Burnout and Capacity Constraints

Risk: The GTHL relies heavily on volunteer committees and club leadership to implement initiatives. Increasing demands may lead to volunteer fatigue and inconsistent execution.

Mitigation: Implement structured onboarding, recognition, and support programs; introduce shared services to reduce administrative burdens; and explore stipends or incentives where appropriate.

2. Financial Sustainability

Risk: Rising costs, economic uncertainty, and uneven access to funding may strain the League and its clubs.

Mitigation: Maintain conservative budgeting practices, pursue diversified funding (grants, sponsorships, fee structures), and create a financial risk reserve to buffer unexpected shocks.

3. Stakeholder Trust and Reputation

Risk: Perceptions of inequity, lack of transparency, or inconsistent discipline and governance could erode stakeholder confidence.

Mitigation: Enhance transparency through published KPIs and reporting dashboards, invest in independent complaints and discipline processes, and communicate decisions clearly and consistently.

4. Equity, Inclusion, and Safe Sport Gaps

Risk: Failing to make meaningful progress in areas of DEI and player safety could expose the GTHL to reputational, legal, or moral risk.

Mitigation: Embed DEI and Safe Sport priorities into all operations, require education and certification for coaches and volunteers, and monitor progress through qualitative and quantitative data.

5. Technology and Data Security

Risk: Aging systems, data privacy concerns, and fragmented platforms may limit operational efficiency and increase cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

Mitigation: Invest in modern, integrated platforms; develop a technology roadmap; and adopt best practices for data governance, access control, and cybersecurity. Include guidance for AI adoption and governance.

6. Regulatory and Policy Changes

Risk: Changes at the municipal, provincial, or national levels—including public health, sport governance, or child protection laws—may affect operations.

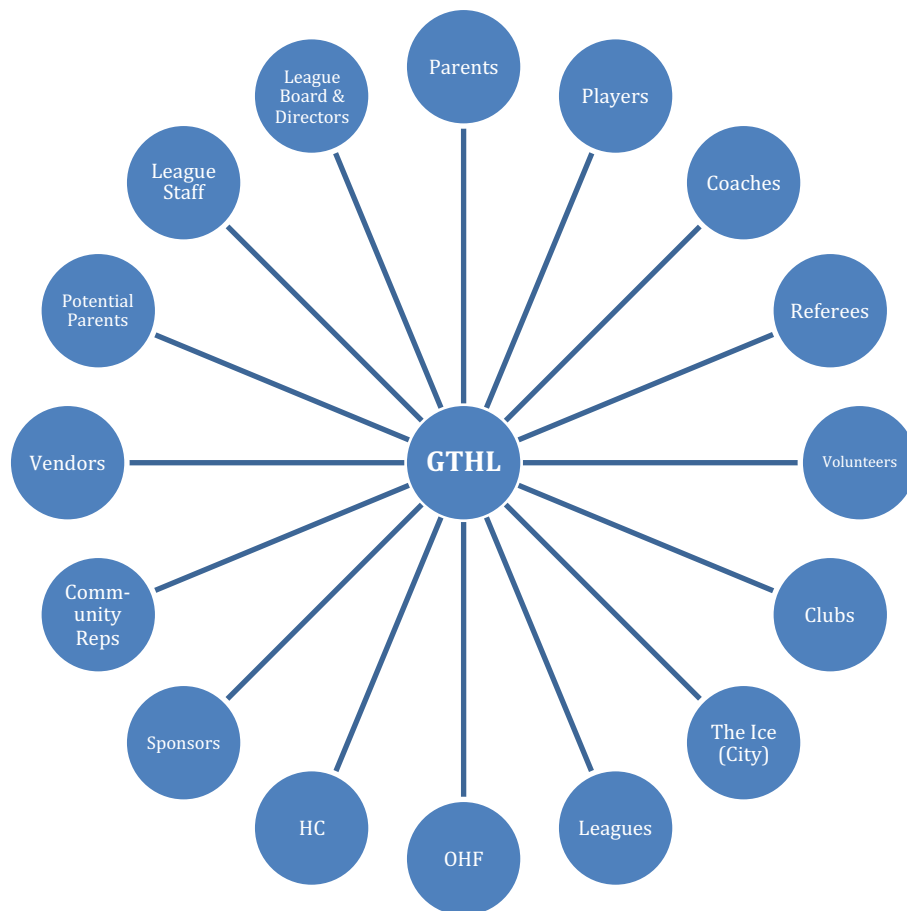
Mitigation: Monitor policy landscapes regularly, maintain strong relationships with governing bodies, and ensure organizational agility to adapt policies and practices as needed.

The GTHL will regularly review and update its risk register, aligning mitigation efforts with its strategic plan and stakeholder expectations. By embedding risk management into planning and execution, the League ensures that its progress remains resilient, responsible, and responsive.

10. Appendices

Stakeholder Map

The stakeholder map provides a visual overview of the individuals, groups, and organizations that have an interest in or influence on the GTHL's success



Strategic Plan & Execution Plan



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