



Grand Prize Submission

Saskatoon & District Comets Female Hockey Association



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Grand Prize Submission

Tell us about your hockey association.

The Saskatoon & District Comets Female Hockey Association is the largest all-female hockey program in Saskatchewan and the largest hockey zone in Saskatoon, serving 833 players and their families. Since 1993, we have been the primary gateway for girls in Saskatoon to enter and stay in hockey. Our core belief is that every player, from a U7 beginner to a U18 AA athlete, deserves to feel seen, heard, and celebrated. We value "Comet Pride," ensuring our players see the rink as a second home where every girl belongs and the hurdles to playing are actively cleared away.

How would you describe your community?

Saskatoon is a vibrant, rapidly growing prairie city. As we grow, our hockey family is expanding to include many neighbors who are brand new to Canada and the game. The Comets represent a sisterhood that spans every corner of our city. We are a community of 833 families who believe in the power of giving girls their own space to lead. Our community is defined by its heart, where alumni like Sophie Shirley inspire the youth, where we celebrate our "C" and "D" teams with the same energy as our "AA" teams, and where the community rallies to ensure that if a girl wants to play, we find a way.

What role does hockey play in your community?

In Saskatoon, hockey is the heartbeat of our winters. But for the Comets, the rink is the city's premier training ground for life. In a province where hockey is a way of life, we ensure our girls aren't just playing a game, they are learning how to lead.

Beyond the physical game, Comets hockey acts as a vehicle for civic duty and "women supporting women." As an all-female league, we understand the vital importance of championing women's causes. Every October, our teams wear Comet owned Pink Jerseys to raise funds and awareness for breast cancer. During the holidays, our teams partner with Adelle House (a second-stage shelter for women escaping abusive relationships) and CUMFI (supportive housing for at-risk Indigenous women and children). Our players come together to build festive necessity baskets for these families. We deliberately choose these causes because they teach our athletes the profound impact of girls helping women in their own community.

Crucially, hockey serves as a tool for resilience. National research from Canadian Women & Sport shows a staggering crisis: 1 in 3 Canadian girls drop out of sports by late adolescence, compared to just 1 in 10 boys. Through Comets hockey, we combat this. By fostering a culture of peer-to-peer support and community service, we keep our teenagers engaged. Hockey is the classroom where we teach 833 young women how to lead, overcome adversity, and serve their city long after they leave the rink.



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What challenges exist in your community that keep kids from playing hockey?

1. **The Financial Hurdle:** Rising inflation makes hockey a luxury many families struggle to afford.
2. **The "Entry" Knowledge Gap:** For families new to the sport, the equipment requirements and the unique "culture" of the rink can feel like an intimidating barrier. It's not just about the gear; it's the fear of not belonging in a space that feels unfamiliar.
3. **The Coaching Gap:** Girls leave the game when they don't see themselves reflected on the bench. With women making up only 25% of coaches nationally, the lack of female role models is a direct barrier to girls staying in the sport.

What is your hockey association currently doing to overcome these challenges?

Despite these challenges, the Comets are defying national trends with a 4.1% growth rate and a 90%+ retention rate. We achieve this through:

- **Financial Advocacy:** We proactively connect families to existing external financial organizations and maintain internal networks for gear. To combat the extreme costs of goaltending, we provide dedicated subsidies for goalie registration, training and supply free equipment to encourage growth at this vital position.
- **Every Player Matters:** We believe a girl's first day at the rink should feel like coming home, not like passing a test. We dismantle the "intimidation barrier" by intentionally celebrating every player, from the U7 beginner to the U18 AA veteran. By providing 1-on-1 guidance for new families and featuring every team on our platforms, we ensure that "new" never means "outsider." This culture of being seen and heard is the direct driver behind our 90%+ player retention rate.
- **Internal & Female-Led Mentorship:** We require a female coach on every bench, but more importantly, we build leaders from within. To support our current volunteers, we partner with the University of Saskatchewan to host joint practices for our U13-U18 teams, allowing our coaching staff to receive hands-on training alongside top-tier university coaches. On the ice, older players volunteer at beginner practices to give back. Through our U7 Mentorship program, our U18 players regularly join U7 skates to demonstrate fundamentals and connect with the next generation. By turning our teenagers into active role models for our youngest players, we are hoping to solve the female coaching shortage before it begins.



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Please share the association's vision for using the \$75,000 Grand Prize to encourage more kids to play hockey by developing solutions that look to remove barriers in the game of hockey and make the game more accessible, inclusive and equitable for everyone?.

The Saskatoon Comets are the primary gateway for girls to fall in love with hockey. Our \$75,000 vision focuses on dismantling the "first-day" barriers for new families and turning our players into lifelong leaders through a self-sustaining ecosystem.

Pillar 1: Inaugural Saskatoon Female Hockey Day We will host a city-wide event to welcome families who have historically felt the rink was out of reach.

- **The Action:** Provide "Try-and-Stay" clinics with free ice time and instruction. We will use a hybrid gear model: 25 "Welcome Kits" gifted to new registrants, and a 25-set "Equipment Library" for annual recruitment.
- **Goal:** Enrollment of 50 new families within 12 months, with the Equipment Library providing a sustainable resource for an estimated 150+ players over the next five seasons

Pillar 2: "Comet Leadership Legacy" To fight the 1-in-3 dropout rate for girls in sport, we will turn our players into the next generation of coaches.

- **The Action:** Fund certifications for graduating athletes. These "Coaches-in-Waiting" will receive a stipend to complete a structured 10-hour mentorship block (training + on-ice sessions) within our U7/U9 divisions.
- **Goal:** Fund 20 female certifications and track 200 mentorship hours by month 18. This ensures our newly trained leaders have immediate, meaningful placements and our youngest players have relatable role models on the ice.

Pillar 3: "No Girl Left Behind" Forever Fund We are moving from one-time help to a permanent safety net for our families.

- **Immediate Relief:** We will provide registration subsidies for 25+ families facing financial pressures through a confidential, simple application process.
- **The Sustainability Move:** We will use \$10,000 as seed capital to launch the Annual Comet Pride Legacy Banquet. This event will raise the recurring revenue needed to keep our Equity Fund and Equipment Library full forever.
- **Goal:** Support 25 families in Year 1; raise 1.5x the subsidy amount via the banquet to ensure fund growth.



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Kruger Big Assist Grand Prize Proposal

The Saskatoon Comets have designed a phased 18-month rollout to ensure maximum impact and long-term sustainability. Our budget is balanced between immediate action and the creation of a permanent financial legacy.

Program 1: Female Hockey Day & Newcomer Clinics Equipment represents the single largest barrier to entry for new families. By investing \$20,000 in a hybrid equipment model (25 permanent kits and 25 rotating library sets), the Comets will create a long-term asset that supports hundreds of players over multiple seasons.

- **25 "Welcome to the Comets" Gift Kits:** Gifted permanently to our first 25 newcomer registrants from underrepresented communities. This creates immediate "ownership" of the sport and removes the largest financial hurdle for families entering the game.
- **25 "Try-and-Stay" Library Kits:** A permanent equipment library owned by the Association for rotating use during clinics, ensuring we have a sustainable resource to welcome new players for years to come.

Program 2: Leadership Legacy This program bridges the gap for our graduating players and addresses the coaching crisis. We have allocated \$6,000 for certifications to ensure cost is never a barrier to becoming a coach or official. The \$9,000 stipend fund values the time of our young female leaders, providing them with a meaningful "first job" in hockey and ensuring our U7 and U9 girls have relatable role models on the ice.

Program 3: "No Girl Left Behind" Forever Fund To ensure every girl remains in the game, we have allocated \$17,000 for registration relief. This fund is reactive and accessible, ensuring no current Comet has to hang up her skates due to family financial concerns or pressures. Additionally, \$5,000 is dedicated to goaltender-specific support, as equipment costs are a known barrier to growth in that position.

The Sustainability Move: We will use \$10,000 as seed capital to launch the **Annual Comet Pride Legacy Banquet**. This event will generate the recurring revenue needed to replenish our Equity Fund and Equipment Library in perpetuity, transforming this grant into a permanent community legacy.

Launch Timeline:

- **Months 1–6:** Focus on procurement and immediate relief. We will purchase all 50 gear kits and open the "No Girl Left Behind" subsidies to ensure no player is forced to leave the game this season.
- **Months 7–12:** We will host the Inaugural Female Hockey Day and begin the Mentorship blocks. Critically, we will host the Inaugural Legacy Banquet to replenish the fund for the following season.
- **Months 13–18:** Focus shifts to the second cycle of mentorship and clinics. By this stage, the "Forever Fund" will be self-sustaining through banquet revenue, ensuring the \$75,000 Grand Prize serves Saskatoon for decades.



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	Months 1-6	Months 7-12	Month 13 - 18	Total
Female Hockey Day & Newcomer Clinics				
25 "Library" Rotating Kits (@ \$400/ea)	\$10,000			\$10,000
25 "Welcome" Gift Kits (@ \$400/ea)	\$10,000			\$10,000
Ice Rental & Facility Fees for Clinics	\$1,500	\$1,500		\$3,000
Leadership Legacy				
Certification Fees (Coach/Ref/Safety) for U18 Alumni	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$6,000
Coach-in-waiting Mentorship Stipends		\$4,500	\$4,500	\$9,000
"No Girl Left Behind" Forever Fund				
Individual Registration Subsidies	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$22,000
Legacy Banquet Seed Capital		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
Goal-Tending Equipment & Training Subsidies	\$2,500	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$5,000



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