

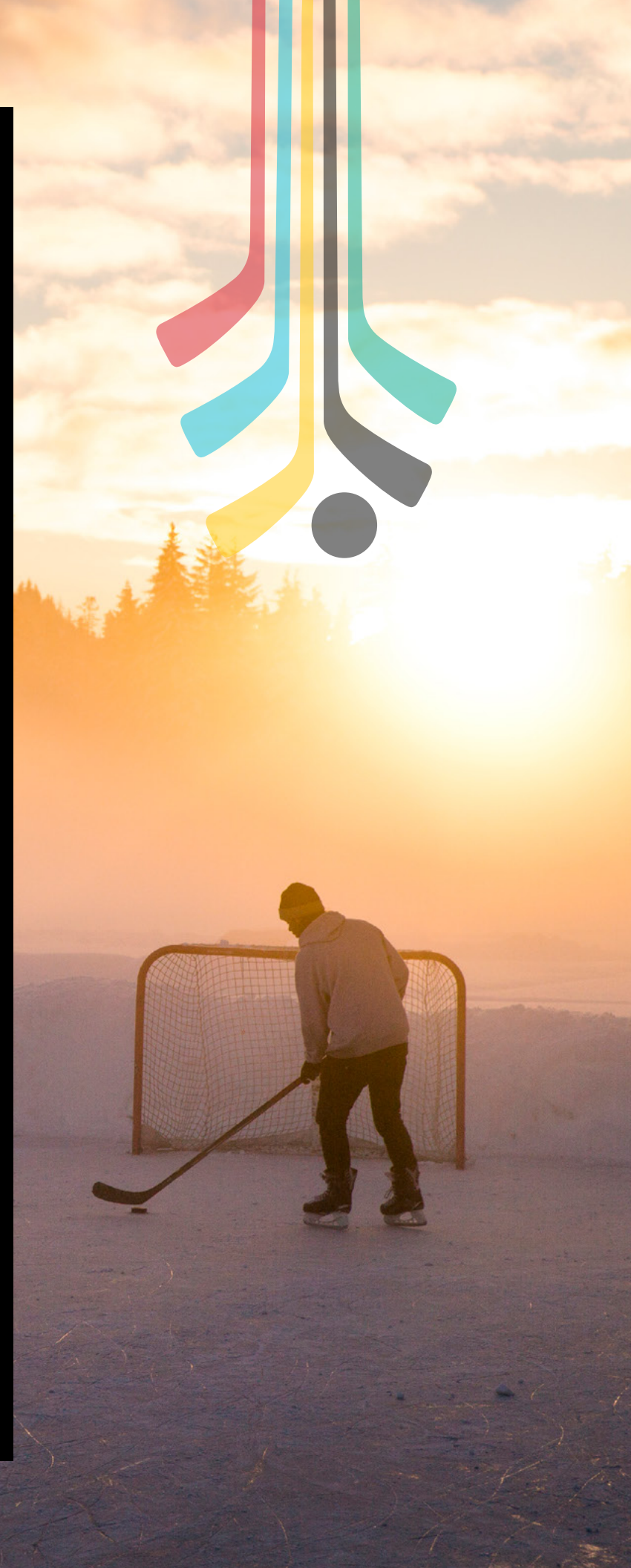
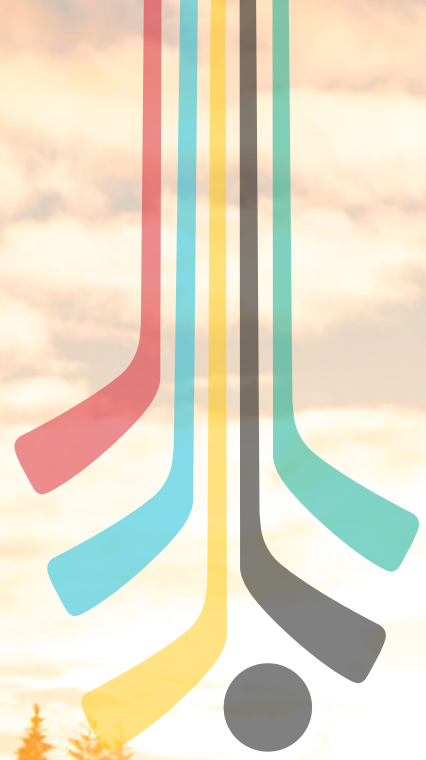


FUTURE OF
HOCKEY LAB

IMPACT REPORT

IDEAS TO ACTION

DECEMBER 2023



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The FHL acknowledges with gratitude that we work and gather on the traditional territories of the diverse Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island (Canada). These nations, with their unique languages, traditions and deep connections to the land, have been stewards of these territories for millennia. It is with humility and respect that we acknowledge the historical and ongoing impact and trauma of colonization. As part of our responsibility to nurture a harmonious relationship with the land and its original inhabitants, the FHL is committed to fostering understanding, embracing reconciliation, and working collaboratively towards a future where the rights, cultures, and voices of Indigenous peoples are upheld and celebrated.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Future of Hockey Lab (“FHL”) Impact Report: *Ideas to Action* presents a comprehensive overview of our journey in reimagining hockey.

As the first of its kind in the world, the FHL has been a catalyst for strategic learning, innovative solutions, and impactful change. Through our work, we’ve gained valuable insights into the barriers to access

and developed strategies to foster belonging in the sport. This report showcases the outcomes of our lab, the learnings we’ve gathered, and the steps we’re taking next.

OUR IMPACT INCLUDES:



Innovation support towards developing and now scaling the groundbreaking idea Open Ice which identified data on ice time as a foundational gap in our country’s hockey infrastructure.



44+ diverse changemakers who join a very small number of Canadians who understand the intersection of equity, innovation and hockey; and are inspired and equipped to lead change.



Significant strides in understanding and addressing the root causes (e.g. patterns, trends, structures and mental models) that underlie the challenges facing hockey today.

**HOCKEY IS A GAME LOVED BY MANY,
BUT IT FACES SOME BIG CHALLENGES.**

THAT’S WHY WE’RE HERE.

In the pages of this Impact Report, we’ll show you how we’re using social innovation to reimagine hockey so it’s a better sport for everyone.

WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED

Sport has many benefits - it helps us develop and learn important skills, it brings people together, and it can even help us make better decisions and also do well in school. **But right now, hockey isn't giving everyone the chance to take part, and many feel unwelcome.** In fact, participation in hockey has been in decline for many years while issues persist. The sport significantly underserves female players, racialized communities, and those without the financial means to play. Innovation and diversity of thought are urgently needed to increase access and belonging in hockey.

MOVING FROM TALK TO ACTION

The FHL fills an unmet need in hockey - a way to move from problems to solutions.

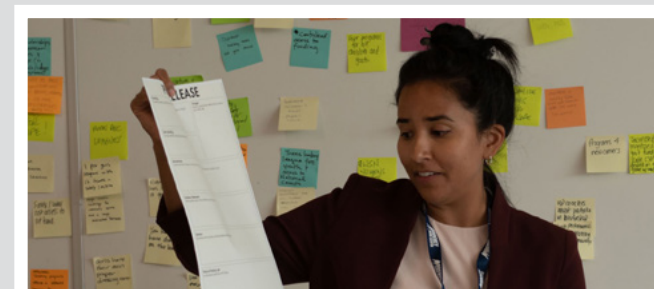
There is a lot of research on the barriers to accessing hockey and issues with its culture. There is also an abundance of conversation about the problems in hockey. The FHL was created to take action. The work of solving those problems involves tackling the root causes that produce the problems in the first place by influencing the behaviours of populations, organizations, and institutions. This is not simple work but we can't get anywhere unless we start trying. Less talking, more doing.

WHY A LAB?

The motivation for the FHL came from the observation that, while there is a good understanding of the issues across the ecosystem, this level of change won't happen without dedicated action, diversity of thought, and innovation. **The FHL was created to support people (inside and outside of hockey) in developing innovative solution ideas, testing these ideas, then modifying the ideas over several iterations in response to what is learned.** This "try and learn" methodology is designed to tackle persistent problems that can't be solved by linear strategic planning.

A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO BIG CHANGES

Robust programs and incremental change are critically important but, while well-intended and purposeful, they rarely tackle the systems that perpetuate the problem in the first place. And so the problems persist. This lab is focused on changes that are bold, systemic and resilient. **Most importantly we focus on solutions that tackle the root causes of issues by disrupting the ways that systems work - sometimes this means challenging the way things have worked for generations.** It is humble, steady work - not quick fixes - but in just two years we have already started to see the impact of our efforts.



Our Partners and Allies in Change

Scotiabank

NOVA SCOTIA
NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE

BAUER

HOCKEY
NOVA SCOTIA

Jumpstart
Bon départ

NATIONAL

THE CARNEGIE
INITIATIVE

For more information on the FHL, its team and Board of Mentors please see:
www.futureofhockeylab.ca

TIMELINE

2021



APRIL 2021

FHL is formed as an initiative of Hockey Nova Scotia

SEPT 2021

Soft launch of the FHL

NOV 2021

Inaugural cohort program with changemakers from across Nova Scotia

2022



MAY 2022

The leaders behind the ice equity project ("Open Ice") from cohort one win Kraft Hockeyville

MAY 2022

Inaugural cohort program with changemakers from across Nova Scotia

SUMMER 2022

FHL publishes eight stories featuring ideas, initiatives and changemakers from the inaugural cohort program

2023



DEC 2022

FHL is incorporated federally as an independent not-for-profit organization

JAN 2023

FHL board of directors formed

APRIL 2023

FHL joins TSN Panel: Canadian Brands Come Together to Celebrate the World's Best Players and Accelerate Growth in Girls and Women's Hockey

JUNE 2023

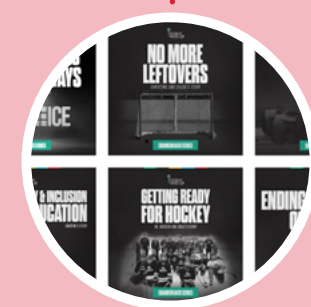
Second cohort program kicks off with changemakers from across Nova Scotia and Ontario

OCT 2023

Cohort participants ("Fellows") showcase the outcomes of their work as part of the Future of Hockey Forum, hosted by Cape Breton University and the Membertou First Nation in conjunction with Kraft Hockeyville

NOV 2023

Two ideas from cohort two are selected for further FHL supports





IMPACT AREA 1:

INNOVATIVE IDEAS

FHL's signature program involves cohorts of community volunteers who are guided through a structured process to generate, test and refine new ideas.

The lab sets the conditions for innovation, stimulating novel ideas by helping people to look at root causes from diverse perspectives, brainstorm options, and then refine these. Each idea evolves significantly over the course of the program through research, feedback, testing and coaching. At the end of each cycle, a select number of ideas move forward as local pilot programs or enter a pathway of refined testing and eventually scaling.

IMPACT

The FHL has three main impact areas:

INNOVATIVE IDEAS

INSPIRED CHANGEMAKERS

UNDERSTANDING HOW TO MAKE LASTING CHANGE

BY THE NUMBERS

100'S

OF IDEAS FOR CHANGE IN HOCKEY



10 IDEAS OVER TWO COHORTS SELECTED FOR DEVELOPMENT

2 NEW PROGRAMS

that have benefited hundreds of families over three seasons



1 breakthrough idea that has captured national interest

FOUR

IDEA PITCHES AT A NATIONAL SHOWCASE



1 IDEA READY TO LEAP FROM CONCEPT INTO COMMUNITY TESTING

INAUGURAL COHORT:

FHL's inaugural cohort supported community champions from across Nova Scotia.

These changemakers developed and explored several ideas including: using synthetic ice to bring hockey into newcomer spaces during the summer months with minimal access barriers; a family-based empowerment program that introduces hockey skills to Black families in the Annapolis Valley; a

technology solution that makes it easier for families new to hockey to get helpful information about how to prepare for and participate in the sport, and; an exploration of a model that simplifies registration and makes hockey free for the first few years of participation.

“The FHL is that foundational support that allows changemakers to reach and persevere. They focus on creating systemic and structural change - not just temporary improvements, as had been the case historically.”

Christina Lamey, community leader and innovator behind “Open Ice” (formerly dubbed *No More Leftovers*)

Two additional ideas that emerged from Cohort 1: *Open Ice* and *Getting Ready for Hockey*.

OPEN ICE

Open Ice (originally dubbed *No More Leftovers*) specifically targets the issue of inequitable ice time allocation. Two community volunteers, Christina Lamey and Leijsa Wilton, joined the lab because the scarcity of available ice time was disproportionately affecting female players who had to depend on makeshift and often unpredictable scheduling to secure practice and competition venues. Their issue originated in Cape Breton however it was quickly identified as a problem across Canada.

In fact, this initiative highlighted a foundational gap in our country's hockey infrastructure: the absence of data around ice time. The vision is that if ice utility is transparent and accessible across the country, terrific opportunities will be unlocked to optimize scheduling efficiency, maximize the utilization of recreation infrastructure, break down barriers to access, support new sport infrastructure investment and, ultimately, increase participation. The FHL has secured funding from the Province of Nova Scotia and Hockey Nova Scotia to pilot the work in Nova Scotia before scaling nationally.

On the heels of the cohort program, Christina and Leijsa also went on to spearhead a campaign resulting in their hockey association, Blizzard Hockey, coming first in a national competition and winning \$250,000 from Kraft Hockeyville. That money, along with \$8.2 million from the provincial government, will fund necessary renovations at the Canada Games Complex at Cape Breton University so it can become a hub for women's hockey in the region and the first fully accessible, NHL-size home ice for women and girls in the world.



Christina Lamey & Leijsa Wilton

GETTING READY FOR HOCKEY

Getting Ready for Hockey is a partnership struck during the FHL's first cohort between the Ummah Masjid and Community Centre and the Halifax Hawks Minor Hockey Association. This partnership resulted in a 10-week pilot program offering Muslim youth and their families equipment, ice time, coaching and supports. The goal was to provide an on-ramp to a hockey league in the future. *Getting Ready for Hockey* served 20 families in its initial season, and in the following year, several of the players in this program registered for a hockey program. In the following season, the program was opened up to the local community, introducing an additional 20 players to the sport.



SECOND COHORT:

FHL'S second cohort added community champions from across Ontario.

The second cohort of changemakers in FHL's innovation lab focused on this question, “How might we break down barriers to radically accelerate opportunities for girls, women and gender-diverse people across the sport of hockey?”

Over four months, hundreds of ideas were developed and the following were short-listed:

- **Be the NeXT:** A solution to affordability involving an endowment fund that would remove hockey registration costs for all girls and gender diverse kids under the age of 18 thereby dramatically increasing their participation in hockey.
- **Fresh Ice:** An immersive VR solution to overcome barriers and inspire late-entry participation among girls, women, and gender-diverse individuals.

- **Person Over Player:** An app solution that prioritizes the well-being and psychological safety of girls, women and gender diverse players through anonymous feedback to leaders and access to specialized resources without ramifications.
- **See Them Be Them Respect Them:** A solution to increase representation of female leaders through a multi-tiered mentorship program that provides active support and models allyship.

In November 2023, the mentorship idea *See Them Be Them Respect Them* was selected to move forward with another round of FHL supports focusing on further refinement and differentiation.



IMPACT AREA 2: INSPIRED CHANGEMAKERS

The lab attracts community volunteers who are passionate for change in hockey.

These changemakers are part of an intensive experience that connects them to others who share their passion, gives them space and support to dive deep on issues affecting hockey, and introduces them to practices and techniques for innovation. Upon completion of the cohort the changemakers

become Fellows of the FHL. The strength of the FHL Fellows is their diversity. They give voice to different cultural communities, identities, and hockey experiences. They also join a handful of people in this country with a deep understanding of the intersection of hockey, ED&I and innovation.



BY THE NUMBERS

44 CHANGEMAKERS OVER TWO COHORTS OF THE FHL LAB

Growing from one province (Nova Scotia) to two provinces (Nova Scotia and Ontario)

495% GROWTH IN APPLICATIONS FROM THE FIRST TO SECOND COHORT



The FHL experience is a powerful one for many of the cohort participants. Their experience inspires them to work towards change in hockey, equips them to lead change in hockey, and gives them a better understanding of the issues affecting access and belonging in hockey. The following are reflections from four FHL Fellows on their experience.



Teresa Joudrie



“Learning and leading through a social innovation lens with the FHL has been a game-changer personally and professionally. It has fueled my passion to create change and a positive impact for folks who don’t always have the loudest voices. It has inspired me to ‘double down’ in this space, knowing that change is necessary. The time is now to do the hard work to change the current narrative.

I could not be prouder to work alongside so many talented and diverse folks who are also interested in making change. Personally, it is important for me to show representation in this space so non-binary and trans youth know that they are not alone in this sport. The FHL has shown me that when you put the right people together, they can reimagine an entirely new future that is 100% achievable.”

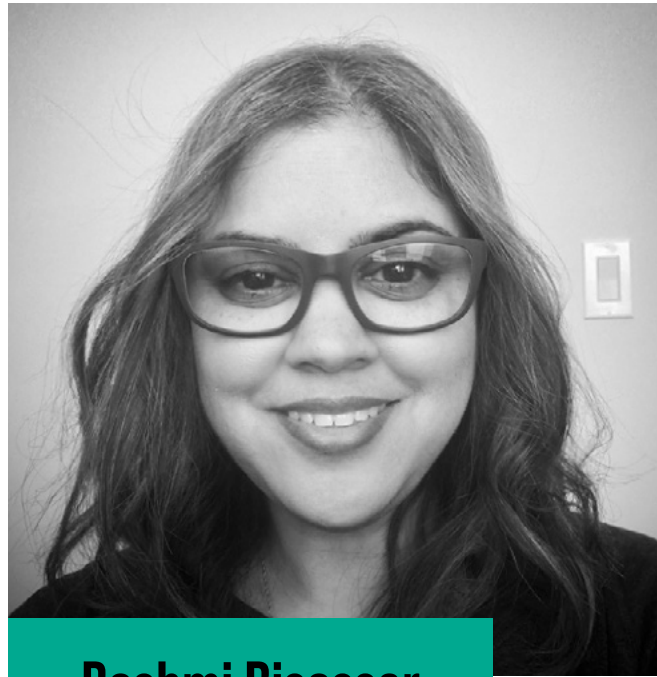


“As someone who felt like an outsider in the world of hockey and was hesitant to participate in its conversations, the FHL showed me that there is an inclusive path for individuals like me in hockey leadership. What was remarkable was the diverse backgrounds of my cohort members, yet we all connected and empathized with each other’s stories. This gave me, someone who had never played hockey but was deeply committed to social justice, a platform to share my experiences and learn from others.

Thanks to my experience with FHL, I’ve since joined various sports and entertainment law-related organizations, allowing me to continue my work in this field. Without the FHL, I might have never healed my inner desire to participate in hockey and I would have also never known my desire to continue working in sports leadership.”



Kimia Daneshvari



Reshmi Bisessar

“

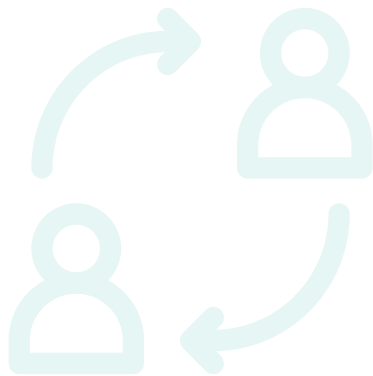
“I applied to the FHL because I wanted to apply the theoretical knowledge gained during my academic studies and foresight work on the inherent biases and the impact of colonialism on the exclusion of people of color from arenas and rinks throughout Canada. My involvement with the FHL has provided me with a renewed sense of agency, dispelling prior doubts about the potential for meaningful change within the system.

I am now actively seeking opportunities within social justice organizations, where I can apply my education and prototyping methodologies acquired from my involvement with the FHL to advocate for change and provide a platform for marginalized voices. My ultimate goal is to contribute to the design of a more inclusive future for Canada, rooted in the teachings of the Indigenous peoples upon whose land the nation was founded. This vision is driven by a desire for my children and grandchildren to reside in a Canada where every voice is heard and respected.”

“

“Being a part of the FHL program and community had a huge impact on my career aspirations. The hands-on programming empowered me to connect the dots between the innovation theory I learnt in graduate school and real world application in an incredibly inspiring way.

As a result, I had the confidence to explore further work opportunities connected to design thinking in EDI. I even shifted the focus of my research proposal to look at youth and psychological safety in hockey culture using tools I learnt from the lab.”



THE CHANGEMAKERS



Tiana Eghdam



IMPACT AREA 3:

Understanding HOW to make lasting change

The thinking and research of each cohort generates new insights into barriers and solutions in hockey.

More specifically, our process generates a deepened understanding of the root causes that lead to the problems in the first place - as well as how they can be addressed in a fundamental and lasting way. This understanding helps inform our strategies, and the strategies of others, by revealing where in the culture, policies and practices of hockey we can effect the most change.

As novel ideas are developed and tested, insights into challenges and barriers in hockey's culture and system are better understood. For example:

- *Open Ice* documented how challenging it is for new teams and leagues to access ice for practices and games, and how the scheduling norms, practices and policies of many associations and municipalities perpetuate this inequity, often with no accountability. This draws attention to the power hierarchies and how deeply rooted these are in hockey culture.
- *Be the NeXt* discovered that while there are excellent programs and resources to help new players get started in hockey, there is a major gap when it comes to sustained financial support for long term pathways through hockey. At the same time, the competitive environment for sponsors tends to focus on short-term solutions and quick fixes.
- In the analysis of a series of ethnographic interviews conducted by the FHL, deeply personal stories of systemic, racial, and/or gender discrimination, affordability, and physical accessibility led to the discovery of insights that hadn't been illuminated or explored before.
- The theme of the last cohort revealed that the most significant opportunities for change for girls, women and gender-diverse people are around affordability, gaps in player pathways, representation, and late starts.

Our process brings together people who have experienced hockey's inequities, people who are part of the current hockey system, and creative thinkers who understand innovation. The combination and diversity of these perspectives reveals rich and powerful insights. FHL's efforts (process, technologies, expertise) to support these groups in discovering and testing interventions gives a nuanced understanding of new possibilities.

FHL works to sustain this growing network, documents and shares this learning openly, and collaborates with an extensive network of other individuals and organizations that are leading change in hockey.

BY THE NUMBERS

8 PERSONAS

that illuminate the challenges that women, girls and gender diverse people experience in hockey

Reaching 72,804 users across social media platforms:

Facebook: 21,712 LinkedIn: 44,840
Instagram: 5,996 Twitter/X: 256

8 STORIES

about changemakers in hockey that feature their FHL journey



FHL WEBSITE

late February-Nov 20,2023

TOTAL UNIQUE VISITORS: 3,800
TOTAL PAGE VIEWS: 11,850

LET'S WRITE RIGHT THE FUTURE OF HOCKEY TOGETHER



WE ARE ON OUR WAY

While many conversations around hockey focus on the problems plaguing the sport, the FHL aims to shift the narrative toward actionable solutions. We are not just doing the right things; we are doing them exceptionally well. From doubling our cohort participants to refining our program design, we're becoming more efficient and effective in how we deliver. Our iterative cycles of testing and refinement are helping in the transition from problem diagnosis to solutions that work. Our lab is not just an innovation hub; it's a catalyst for building more inclusive and equitable sporting communities. And we are starting to see the results.



JOIN US

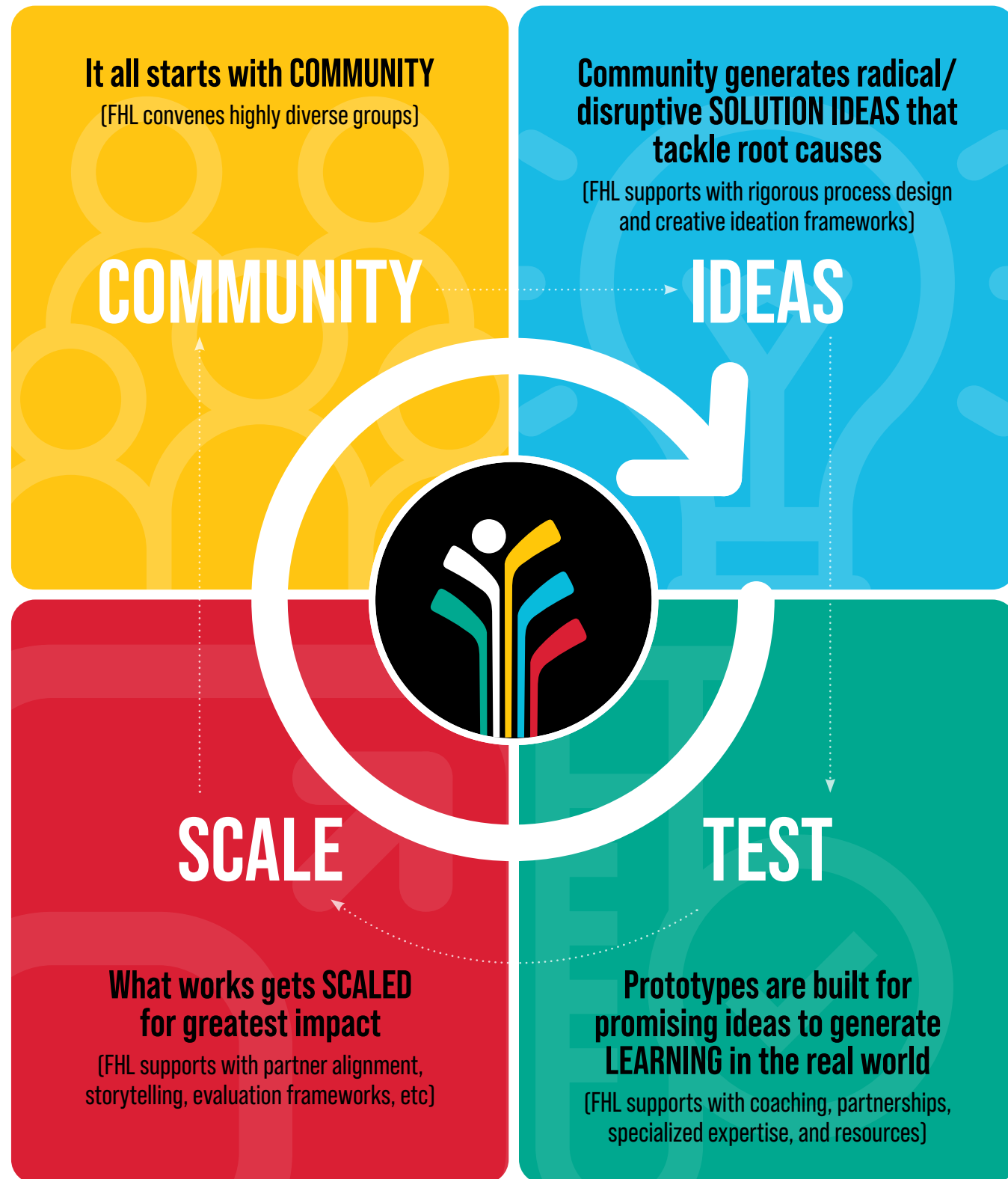
We invite you to join us in this exciting, challenging, and profoundly important journey. Let's right the future of hockey together, transforming it into a sport that is not just loved by Canadians but is truly for *all* Canadians.



STAY CONNECTED FOR UPDATES BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE AT [FUTUREOFHOCKEYLAB.COM](https://futureofhockeylab.com)



OUR PROCESS



Creating the conditions for success

OUR VALUES



We are a lab, with community at its center

