

Final Marketing Plan

Group 4: Campbell Coviello, Colin Gibson, Luca Kassab, Zack Schteingart, Aubrey Wallberg

School of Kinesiology, University of Michigan

SM 246: Principles of Marketing

Professor Marisol Villagomez

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TO: Professor Marisol Villagomez

FROM: Campbell Coviello, Colin Gibson, Luca Kassab, Zach Schteingart, Hunter Shafer, Aubrey Wallberg

DATE: December 8, 2025

SUBJECT: Ypsilanti Youth Sports Initiative Marketing Plan

Purpose

Youth sports participation in the United States has steadily declined over the past decade, reaching a ten-year low of 36 % among children ages 6 to 12 (Aspen Institute, 2023). Cost remains the biggest barrier to entry. Children from the lowest-income households participate at about half the rate of those from the highest-income households (Project Play, 2024). Youth sports spending has risen 46 % in five years making many families face increasing financial strain (Aspen Institute, 2025).

These challenges are even more seen in the Ypsilanti area, where the child poverty rate is 38.1% and the median household income is \$44,141 (Census Reporter, 2023; RAND Corporation, 2019). The Ypsilanti Youth Sports Initiative (YYSI) is being created to offer accessible, low-cost programming for children ages 5 to 11 who are most affected by these national declines.

Research shows that access, affordability, and program structure strongly influence participation. Recreational leagues as a whole have declined by 20% while expensive travel programs have grown. This limits opportunities for lower-income families and children to participate in sport programs (TIME Magazine, 2017). Children also participate in fewer sports overall. Participation is averaging 1.63 per year, due to early specialization and burnout (Aspen Institute, 2024). This specialization increases injury risk and long-term disengagement (Myer et al., 2015). YYSI's

year-round, multi-sport format counters these issues by encouraging exploration and reducing pressure.

YYSI builds on the model of the Michigan Youth Sport Initiative (MYSI), which serves more than 300 children in underserved communities near Ann Arbor. MYSI lowers equipment costs, covers fees, and partners with local organizations to increase enrollment and retention in youth sports (MYSI, 2024).

Marketing Strategy and Enrollment Goals

YYSI's first-year goals include enrolling 150 children by December 2026, achieving a 75 % seasonal retention rate. YYSI wants to keep annual program costs at or below \$400 per child, and ensure that 70 to 80 % of participants play more than one sport. These goals directly address national issues of affordability, access and declining youth engagement with sports as a whole. The marketing strategy focuses on reaching families through trusted sources. School-based and community-based outreach, such as flyers and newsletter announcements across the Ypsilanti area. This provides consistent visibility for both children and parents who want to get involved. Digital marketing is also essential for YYSI. Children ages 8 –10 average six hours of daily screen time, and older children average nine hours (Legner, 2024). Parents and older siblings frequently use Facebook and Instagram, making these platforms key for highlighting affordability, flexibility, and the value of multi-sport participation. Free Try-It Days, referral incentives, and messaging that addresses safety and cost concerns help build trust in low-income communities (Vella et al., 2022).

Budget and Funding Approach

YYSI operates with a total budget of \$7,865, funded mainly through the All Kids Play Grant and the Growth to Expand Youth Sport Access Grant, which support most outreach and marketing efforts. Families in low-income brackets spend an average of \$604 per year on youth sports (Aspen Institute, 2025), so keeping program costs at or below \$400 per child helps reduce financial barriers for Ypsilanti families.

Additional funding and visibility will come from a campus Coffee and Donut Sale, a partnership event with Pizza House and a GoFundMe campaign. More than three quarters of the budget goes toward marketing, reflecting the importance of building trust and awareness before and during the program launch. This approach illustrates that low-income families rely heavily on school-based and local communication rather than traditional mass marketing (RAND Corporation, 2019).

Projected Community Impact

YYSI is designed to address the main barriers limiting youth sports participation in underserved communities, including cost, limited access, reduced multi-sport opportunities, and declining recreational infrastructure. Its approach focuses on affordability, inclusivity and strong community connections (Aspen Institute, 2023). The program will use continuous evaluation over the course of its startup to track enrollment, retention, parent satisfaction, affordability, and community engagement. These metrics will help to guide seasonal adjustments to keep the program aligned with the needs of Ypsilanti families.

By the end of 2026, YYSI wants to serve as a sustainable and community driven model which strengthens local recreation, supports youth development in sports. Its focus on multi-sport participation, affordability, and community trust makes it positioned to address participation decline that disproportionately impact low-income families.

Situation Analysis

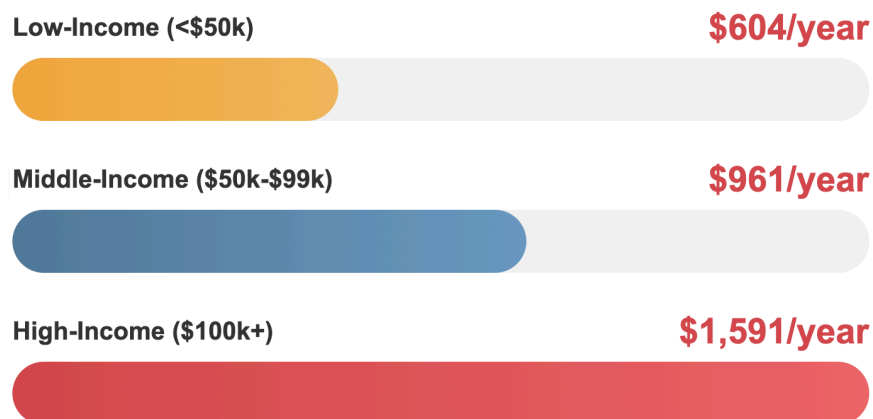
Market Research

The State of Youth Sports

Youth sports participation in the United States has declined steadily in recent years, with notable demographic and socioeconomic disparities. The Aspen Institute's 2023 State of Play report indicates that although 63% of children aged 6 to 12 have tried sports at least once, only 36% participate regularly. This represents the lowest sustained participation rate in a decade and shows substantial challenges in retention. Between 2019 and 2022, participation for this age group decreased by 5%, which is approximately 1.2 million fewer youth regularly engaging in team sports (Aspen Institute, 2023).

Annual Youth Sports Spending by Household Income

Average spending on primary sport per child (2024)



As shown above, the gap between the spending on youth sports is directly related to the income level of the family. A family that makes below \$50,000 annually spends about

\$987 less on youth sports than a family who makes above \$100,000 annually. This demonstrates that there is a play-to-play model currently in place at the youth level, thus demonstrating the decline that sports have seen at the youth level.

The Income Gap

High-income families spend **2.6x MORE** than low-income families on youth sports (\$1,591 vs \$604), creating a significant participation barrier for children from economically disadvantaged households.

\$1,016

National Average
Family Spending

+46%

Increase in Family
Spending Since
2019

\$475

Additional
Spending on
Secondary
Sports

As shown in the graph above, there is a 46% increase that has occurred in the cost that families must pay for their child's participation in youth sports. As well, the RAND Corporation (2019) documents a 14% gap between low-income and higher-income youth participation (52% versus 66%).

Shifts in the youth sports market have also affected participation. Traditional recreational leagues have declined by 20%, while more costly specialized travel teams limit opportunities for economically disadvantaged families (TIME Magazine, 2017). This decrease in recreational sports can be pointed to more than just travel teams, but also the increase in price for these leagues, and the vast amount of alternatives to sports

in the modern world of technology. Additionally, early sport specialization, over-competitive environments, and diminished emphasis on enjoyment contribute to youth dropout rates. The need for inclusive, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate programming is understated (Jersey Watch, 2024; Youth First, 2024).

The youth sports industry represents a significant market with growing economic impact, yet this growth doesn't align. There exists a huge opportunity to develop affordable, community centered sports programs emphasizing multi-sport participation. In summary, the market research highlights the importance of creating accessible, affordable, and enjoyable youth sports opportunities that respond to economic, social, and behavioral challenges. Programs focused on the 5–11 age group in low-income communities, such as Ypsilanti, will be well-positioned to address unmet needs and foster sustained participation.

Based on the overall state of the market in terms of youth sports participation, specifically for our target audience of children 5-11 in lower-income households, Ypsilanti is the perfect fit for an intervention like ours. With a child poverty rate of 38.1% (triple the state average) and a median household income of \$44,141, Ypsilanti has a large number of families within our target demographic of households earning below \$50,000 annually (BiggestUSCities, 2023; Census Reporter, 2023). This economic profile directly aligns with the national participation gap where only 52% of low-income children play organized sports compared to 66% from higher-income

families (RAND Corporation, 2019). The city's median age of 27 years indicates a young population with significant numbers of children ages 5-11 (Census Reporter, 2023).

While Ypsilanti Township currently offers youth sports leagues through its Parks & Recreation Department and maintains facilities including the 106-acre Ford Lake Park designed as "a youth sports and family park," these programs provide an opportunity to expand affordable, multi-sport programs that specifically target low-income families (Ypsilanti Township, 2024; Jersey Watch, 2024).

Other Issues Impacting Youth Sports

In addition to cost and retention challenges, several practical and social factors limit youth sports participation in Ypsilanti. Transportation and parent time commitments are significant barriers for low-income families, making local and conveniently scheduled programs essential (RAND Corporation, 2019). Early specialization further contributes to dropout, as the average child now participates in only 1.63 sports, down from over two a decade ago, increasing the risk of burnout and injury (Aspen Institute, 2024). Participation trends also reveal disparities: Black youth have experienced a steep decline from 45% in 2013 to 35% in 2024, and boys are facing a sharper decrease compared to girls, while Asian and Hispanic youth participation shows variable growth. Addressing these factors through a program that emphasizes multi-sport engagement, flexible scheduling, local access, and cultural inclusion is critical to sustaining participation. By designing programming that responds to these barriers, Ypsilanti's diverse youth population can have meaningful opportunities to engage consistently in sports before the critical age-13 dropout point.

Basketball, Football, Baseball, Soccer, & Softball Participation within the Youth

Kids between the ages of five and eleven engage with sports in different ways, so by understanding these patterns we can help design programs that keep them involved.

Basketball is the most popular sport for this age group, with roughly 29% of children participating, while soccer and football are played by about 26% each (Morning Consult, 2025). Baseball and softball though have seen a decline in rates of play. At one point, they were staples of youth recreation, but now with the increased prices of bats and gear, they have seen a decline in participation (Aspen Institute, 2023). The same trend can be seen with football participation, which has seen a sharp decline in recent years (Aspen Institute, 2023; KK.org, 2023). This once again can be pointed to the cost of pads, helmets, gloves, and other football gear. As well, it does not help that many children choose to specialize in a single sport around age 10, which can lead to burnout and reduce opportunities to explore other activities (Healthy Sport Index, 2024). Offering multi-sport programs for kids ages five to eleven provides a chance to try a variety of sports, stay active, and discover what they enjoy.

As well, it has been shown that early access makes a big difference in sports participation for the youth. When children have access to sports, they are willing to play, but rather the financial issues prevent this. As we can see in 2024, “Children from the lowest-income homes play sports at up to half the rate of those from the highest-income group,” (Project Play, 2024). This demonstrates that the financial barriers for sports are a major key to the decrease in play, thus showing that by making sports more accessible for lower income families, we can increase the participation rates immensely. This can

be done by offering a more affordable, multi-sport programs for ages five to eleven, which allows them to try basketball, soccer, baseball or softball, football to begin with. This will give them access to sports, while also helping them discover what they enjoy, stay active, and build the confidence and skills that encourage them to stick with sports beyond the critical pre-teen years.

MYSI Implementation

The Michigan Youth Sport Initiative (MYSI) serves as a strong model for addressing the youth sports participation crisis at the community level. The organization was founded by students from the University of Michigan's School of Kinesiology in 2022 with the goal of expanding access to youth sports for children in under-resourced communities such as Ypsilanti.

Through partnerships with Ypsilanti Community Schools and local organizations, MYSI has supported over 300 children, funded 13 youth teams, and established eight community partnerships. Its programs provide equipment, cover participation costs, and create opportunities for children who otherwise would not have access to organized sports (MYSI, 2024). MYSI's success demonstrates that when financial barriers, equipment shortages, and transportation issues are addressed, participation rises significantly among low-income youth. The organization's community-based model not only promotes athletic engagement but also emphasizes inclusion, mentorship, and personal growth through sport. This approach aligns directly with national findings from the Aspen Institute and RAND Corporation, which highlight affordability and accessibility as the key determinants of long-term participation. By prioritizing local

partnerships and affordability, MYSI effectively bridges the gap between costly travel programs and outdated recreational leagues, offering a sustainable and scalable model for increasing youth sports participation.

In the context of Ypsilanti, MYSI provides evidence that local youth are eager to participate but remain limited by cost and opportunity. Their achievements validate the broader market data showing that programs centered on affordability, inclusion, and fun can successfully retain participants within the critical 5–11 age range before the age-13 dropout cliff. Therefore, our project will build upon MYSI’s proven framework to expand access, leverage community support, and develop a long-term, affordable system that promotes consistent youth engagement in sports.

Target Audience

Our target audience for the Ypsilanti Youth Sports Initiative consists of children ages 5–11 from low-income families in Ypsilanti and surrounding Metro Detroit communities. These families often lack access to affordable, high-quality recreational sports programs due to financial, transportation, and time-related barriers. Many parents in this demographic work long or irregular hours, making it difficult to commit to expensive travel leagues or programs that require constant parental involvement. The average household income in these areas falls well below the state median, meaning that affordability, keeping participation costs under \$500 per year, is a key factor in their decision-making. Parents want safe, community-based programs that keep their kids active, social, and off screens, while also helping them build teamwork,

confidence, and leadership skills.

The children themselves are at an age where sports can have a lasting impact on physical and social development. However, many of them are missing out on these benefits because traditional recreational leagues have declined, and private club teams are far beyond their families' budgets. Our program focuses on soccer, basketball, baseball/softball, and flag football, offering seasonal opportunities that allow kids to explore multiple sports rather than specializing too early. This variety keeps participation fun and prevents burnout, one of the leading reasons children quit sports by age 13. By providing accessible facilities, equipment, and local coaching, we meet both the emotional needs of children (fun, inclusion, belonging) and the practical needs of parents (affordability, convenience, safety).

Ultimately, our ideal "customer" is not just the child but the family as a whole, parents who value community, positive development, and affordable recreation opportunities for their kids. These families make buying decisions based on cost, proximity, and trust. They are drawn to programs that feel personal and community-driven rather than corporate or exclusive. By rebuilding local park and recreation programs in underprivileged areas like Ypsilanti, our initiative restores not only youth sports access but also neighborhood connection and pride.

Competitor Analysis

Private and Club Sports programs

Private and club sports programs are some of the main competitors to community-based recreational sports. Although these programs are more expensive, they are also more specialized, allowing kids to focus on one sport and develop their skills at a higher level. In the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti area, there are many club programs available, but the main challenge is cost. Research shows that families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are often priced out of organized sports, as registration fees, travel expenses, and equipment costs can serve as major barriers to participation (Vella et al., 2022). In some cases, highly talented players can receive scholarships or grants to cover these costs, but such opportunities are rare.

The growing trend toward early sport specialization has also contributed to the decline of recreational sports. Many young athletes feel pressure from parents, coaches, and peers to commit to a single sport in hopes of earning college scholarships. However, research suggests that early specialization can lead to overuse injuries and burnout making them not love the sport the way they used to (Meyer et al., 2022). In contrast, recreational sports promote a more balanced environment where children can try multiple activities, and become more well-rounded athletes. These programs emphasize fun and teamwork rather than performance alone, helping build a broader base of participation within the community.

Academic commitments and school based sports

Academic responsibilities and after-school programs also compete with recreational

sports for children's time and attention. At the end of the day children are students before they are athletes so they may prioritize school over athletics. Programs such as music lessons, student government, and other extracurricular activities can get in the way of participating in recreational sports because of the time commitment and management that it takes.

School athletics can also get in the way of recreational programs. While children ages 5–11 are generally below the threshold for traditional school-sponsored athletic teams, these other commitments still impact participation. Parents and children often put academics and other extracurriculars before recreational sports. Balancing these things can be hard for families, and when dealing with time constraints, physical activity tends to be the first to be cut (American Public Health Association, 2023).

Digital entertainment and video games

Currently the most significant competitor of youth recreation programs is digital entertainment. The growing use of screens and video games reduces the interest in participation in recreational sporting programs. The average screen time for children aged 8-10 is six hours and 11-14 is nine hours. Not including the time spent doing homework on digital devices (Legner, 2024). This increased screen time contributes to lower levels of physical activity and reduced interest in participating in sports or outdoor recreation. Research shows that greater time spent on screens is associated with less time engaged in physical activity and outdoor play, highlighting how digital entertainment often replaces opportunities for movement (Dumuid et al., 2024). Looking at this digital

competition will make youth recreation programs emphasize the need for physical activity and community engagement to rival the entertainment and immediate social enrichment of screens.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Multiple Sports per Fee/Payment	Limited Sports Offered
Year Round Engagement with Rotation of Sports	Parent Hesitancy for Kids to Participate
After-School/Summer Programming (Parents at Work)	Funding - Low Surrounding Area Income
Flexibility with Payments/Scholarships	High Cost of Equipment
Revitalization of Public Parks	
Opportunities	Threats
Public Funding for Equipment	Club/Competitive Sport Leagues
Backing of Local Sports Leagues	Programs for Individual Sports/Sports not Offered
Mentorship from Former Participants	UMich KidSport Summer Programming
Tax Funding for Decreased Costs	Layoffs/Increased Household Costs

NIL/Class Credit Engagement from UMich/Detroit Teams	
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Strengths

The YYSI will lift many of the burdens that come with athletic programs off families with athletically involved children, and maximize the value they get from these experiences. Since 2019, the average cost a family spends on youth sports in the U.S. has increased by 46% (Rand, 2019), drastically reducing the amount of low-income families involved in youth sport. To reverse this trend, families' payments for the YYSI will simultaneously cover the enrollment of their children in multiple sports. This limits parents having to make continuous payments to athletic organizations, something that proves difficult for those that have multiple concurrent financial responsibilities. However, some parents still may have other pressing financial commitments that must take priority over athletic fees, preventing them from submitting their payments on time. For situations like this, this initiative will grant the flexibility to adjust payments so they can make them whenever they are able, eliminating the stress of deadlines and balancing costs.

Outside of the financial perks, the Initiative provides several benefits to the activity of the participating athletes. The seasonal rotation of various sports ensures they will participate in different sports year-round, giving them extended use out of their involvement in the initiative beyond their primary sport. In a similar vein, after-school and summer sport programming will ease the time commitments parents have to make in

order to take them to and pick them up from games and practices, and keep children active during these periods of long idleness. Finally, the revitalization of Ypsilanti's public parks that will come with the bustling athletic affairs will reenergize all corners of the community. The recreational leagues that once populated neighborhoods and local parks are slowly disappearing, having been "nudged aside by private club teams" (Gregory, 2017) that feature rigorous training methods and come at a high cost. Enthusiasm for the YYSI from both families and the participating athletes will revive this faltering landscape, turning the area's parks into a hub of activity once again. These strengths outline the clear groups that will benefit from the YYSI, and bolsters its strategic positioning among competitor leagues.

Weaknesses

Although countless children in the Ypsilanti area will be offered the opportunity to play sports that were not previously available to them through the YYSI, there are some limitations to these offerings. For one, despite the value that parents will be gaining from this initiative, some may still be hesitant to sign off on their children participating in competitive sports, particularly ones involving high levels of contact. This reluctance may stem from the parents' concern that serious injuries may stunt the growth and development of their children, and could lead them to avoid the YYSI in order to eliminate this risk altogether. In addition, despite the measurable aspects the YYSI has implemented in order to increase the financial accessibility of this program, the low-income status of the Ypsilanti area may still present some significant difficulties. Local families enrolled in the program may encounter additional fees despite the

affordable entry cost, namely that of acquiring high-quality gear for their children - a problem that has plagued many families in youth sports across the country. In fact, 35% of all families cited cost as a reason for declining to let their children participate in youth sports (Rand, 2019). The YYSI may also take a slightly longer path in attaining proper, community-backed funding due to the lack of ample financial resources in greater Ypsilanti.

Finally, the initiative's selection of sports may not be expansive enough to cover the extent of sports that its participants are interested in. At the age that most YYSI participants will be, it is essential for them to be involved in a variety of sports; specialization at an early age can often cause burnout due to frequent time commitments and pressure, discouraging them from pursuing the sport further. This is a trend that has accelerated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the amount of sports children aged 6-17 play at the same time dropping 13% (Aspen Institute, 2024). While the YYSI strives to increase participation among youth athletes in the Ypsilanti area, the somewhat small selection of sports it offers may not be what every young athlete is seeking, and could ultimately push them further toward that state of specialization burnout.

Opportunities

Many counties and areas within Michigan and the United States are currently increasing programs for backing youth sports. Utilizing Ypsilanti businesses and tax dollars can greatly reduce the cost for enrollment in the YYSI and sport specific equipment. As

displayed in Kalamazoo County, many local hotel brands contributed to a new \$40 million sports complex in exchange for charging “a 4% assessment to hotel stays under 30 days” (Youth Sports Business Report, 2025). This could assist in convincing local Ypsilanti businesses to contribute to the YYSI, decreasing costs for participants. In addition to this, Detroit is considering adding a tax on Detroit Sporting and Concert events, which could raise up to \$47 million annually (Kast et al., 2025). If this proposal is passed and becomes successful, city leaders within Washtenaw County may consider placing a similar tax on concerts at Michigan Stadium and local sporting events, further raising funds for the YYSI. The overall push for funding youth sports within Michigan, as described above, may increase the likelihood of a state tax break for parents of youth sports, as seen in New Jersey (Lee, 2025). The Promoting Lifelong Activity for Youth (PLAY) Act could grant a \$2000 tax break for taxpayers who cover youth sport expenses. This could further reduce the financial burden placed on YYSI parents who will need to cover enrollment and equipment costs for their children to participate in sports.

There are also several opportunities for partnership with programs, teams, and universities within the Ypsilanti area. First, the YYSI could work with the University of Michigan to recruit coaches and volunteers, similarly to how Kesem approaches this (Kesem, 2025). Camp Kesem has a club at the University of Michigan that works to recruit camp counselors and plan its summer camp for children with family members with cancer. In addition, partnership with Michigan Athletics could provide opportunities for Student-Athlete engagement in the YYSI. Team IMPACT currently

partners with Michigan Athletics to pair a child facing illness or disability with a varsity team to participate in various activities with the team throughout the year (Team IMPACT, 2025). YYSI could partner with Michigan Athletics through an NIL contract avenue, requiring certain athletes to make appearances with YYSI teams throughout the year.

Threats

There are several threats facing the YYSI. According to Project Play and the Aspen Institute (2024), children are more often specializing in one sport since the pandemic. This is likely playing a large role in the decrease in community sport as children who specialize in a sport often move to club or travel sport organizations instead. Therefore, there are fewer children who will enroll and retain with the YYSI. This is further magnified by the fact that children want to play sports with their friends. Thus, if all of one's friends are enrolled in club sport over a community program, one will likely move to a club organization as well. Additionally, in the case that club sport is too expensive, there are several individual sport leagues hosted by Ypsilanti Township that may attract families who wish to specialize in one sport (Ypsilanti Township, 2025).

Outside of specialization, there are currently many established multi-sport programs in Ypsilanti, such as KidSport Summer Camps, hosted by the University of Michigan (University of Michigan Kinesiology, 2025). This program utilizes the Eastern Michigan student recreation center and exposes children to a variety of physical activities throughout the summer. While this is not a sports league, it may pose a threat to the

YYSI as it has strong connections to both the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University and provides children with a way to stay active during the day, while parents are at work. This could decrease the YYSI's enrollment in the summer as some participants would be exposed to physical activity all day. Finally, as the YYSI will primarily serve underprivileged families, layoffs and increased household costs pose a threat to the program. As many families are experiencing financial hardships, parents may be reluctant to enroll their children in the YYSI as it adds to already large expenses and may increase the burden of supporting their family.

Marketing Objectives

1. Enroll 150 children ages 5-11 from low-income Ypsilanti households (earning <\$50,000 annually) in Ypsilanti Youth Sports Initiative programming by December 2026, capturing 3% of the target demographic within the first few months. ‘
2. Achieve 75% retention rate of enrolled participants for seasonal sport rotations by the end of Year 1, addressing the national 70% dropout rate by age 13. Additionally, 85% of enrolled participants will participate in more than one sport in the program, either simultaneously or by season, ensuring they do not suffer specialization burnout at an early age.
3. Keep average annual program cost per child at or below \$400 (including fees and equipment) to ensure affordability for families with the average \$604 low-income sports budget
4. Grow social media presence (Facebook and Instagram primarily because that is where parents are located) consistently by 1,000 followers a month, with a 10% engagement rate from those followers, thus allowing for increased knowledge of our league/program. This is done through our consistency in posting fliers for our leagues, specific clips of games to promote excitement, teamwork, and friendship, and opportunities to get involved with coaching or other forms of help.

5. Achieve 80% parent satisfaction rate regarding program affordability, convenience, and child enjoyment. Measured through post-season surveys, this will help establish Ypsilanti Youth Sports Initiative as the preferred community sports option for low-income families.
6. Maintain average multi-sport participation of kids playing 2 or more sports to 70-80% annually, helping to combat the current national average of 1.63 sports per child. This will be measured using registration data.

Marketing Strategy and Tactics

Though the youth of Ypsilanti will be the primary group benefiting from this initiative, their parents and families will ultimately bear the responsibility of enrolling them in the program and handling the costs and fees it entails. Therefore, a dilemma is presented when devising our marketing strategy over who to focus on: the kids, who can inform their parents of their desire to enroll in the initiative, or the parents who can secure their membership. We determined that striking the right balance between these two groups will allow our initiative to have the highest possible amount of exposure to all residents of the town, regardless of age. To have an impact on the kids, we will distribute marketing materials in places where they are most visible to them, such as in school hallways, public parks, and for some of the older prospective athletes, social media platforms. To attract the eyes of parents, we will also be utilizing highly visible promotional materials on local billboards, community centers, or even transportation hubs. Placing advertisements in the places that locals frequent, our initiative will raise a great amount of awareness to the company, and plant our mission in their minds to turn them into prospective members and athletes. In our first few months of operation, we are aiming to enroll 150 children from low income households in the Ypsilanti area through these marketing efforts, roughly 3% of our target population.

One of the most essential aspects of our initiative's product is its affordability for low-income families who are unable to pay the necessary tuition for athletic programs with higher prices. The marketing materials for this initiative will place a large emphasis on its comparatively low \$400 fees, selling it as a more financially viable option for families and children looking to become involved in the sports landscape. An additional element that will be prominently featured in advertisements is the seasonal pricing packages that will allow members

to participate in different sports year round through our program, ensuring that they are able to remain active and preventing burnout due to specialization in one specific sport. We are aiming for the vast majority of our participants to take advantage of this season-spanning schedule, with approximately 85% percent of athletes participating in multiple sports in the program. Additionally, the retention rates of our program will also likely trend upwards as a result of this structure, and we are aiming for a figure of 75% by the end of the first year.

The marketing strategy of this initiative will center around two central goals: raising awareness of the program among parents and youth athletes, and establishing a brand as an affordable investment that offers tremendous value. At the conclusion of our first year in business, we will survey each participating family on their satisfaction with the program's affordability and enjoyment. Our goal is for this number to reach 80%, greatly enhancing the initiative's reputation as a more accessible pathway to sport for youth. By capturing the attention of our target demographic through both in-person and digital mediums, then hooking them to our services through expressing the benefits our program will provide them, the YYSI will solidify its status as the premier youth athletic program for low income families in the Ypsilanti area.

To effectively reach both the parents who make enrollment decisions and the children who influence them, the Ypsilanti Youth Sports Initiative will implement multiple marketing tactics focused on visibility, accessibility, and community trust. One of the most impactful approaches will be school-based outreach, as schools are the most consistent and reliable communication point for families in our target demographic. We will distribute flyers through backpack handouts, post signs in school hallways and cafeterias, and partner with teachers, counselors, and after-school staff to share information about pricing, scholarships, and seasonal

programming. These school touchpoints ensure that children repeatedly see and talk about the program, while parents receive information from a trusted source.

Beyond school channels, local visibility throughout the community will help ensure that families see the YYSI in their everyday environments. Flyers and posters will be placed in local businesses, yard signs and park signage near playgrounds and apartment complexes will reinforce our presence and make registration top-of-mind during the spring and summer sign-up windows. These are simple but methods of communication but they will help to ensure that all members of the community are seeing the information.

Social media marketing will add to these outreach efforts by targeting parents where they already spend time online. Facebook and Instagram will be the primary platforms, as they are most commonly used by Millennial and Gen Z parents of young children. Posts will focus on clear, visually appealing graphics emphasizing affordability, multi-sport options, and year-round programming, along with short video clips showcasing fun moments, teamwork, practices, and community events. Parent-targeted ads filtered by Ypsilanti zip codes will help drive awareness, while consistent posting aims to grow our audience. Email outreach will support retention and follow-up by sending monthly newsletters with program updates, upcoming registration deadlines, scholarship information, and highlights of participating families.

To strengthen trust and create personal connections, direct community engagement will be a central marketing tactic. YYSI staff and volunteers will table at farmers markets, school fairs, and community festivals, offering on-site registration help and answering questions from families face-to-face. Free “Try-It Days” held at local parks will allow children to sample different sports with provided equipment, giving families a no-cost way to understand the

program before enrolling. These hands-on interactions help build credibility and reduce parents' uncertainty about affordability, safety, and program structure.

Partnerships with local organizations and institutions will further expand our reach. Collaborations with community centers, churches, social-service nonprofits, and pediatric clinics will help distribute flyers, share promotional posts, and reinforce the benefits of multi-sport participation. Additionally, connections with University of Michigan groups will provide added visibility, excite kids and build trust among parents.

Finally, word-of-mouth will be intentionally leveraged through referral incentives and parent-driven promotion. Families will receive small discounts or prizes for referring others, and themed "Bring a Friend" events will encourage kids to invite peers. Sharing parent testimonials and child success stories on social media will also help build community credibility. Collectively, these tactics ensure that YYSI remains visible both online and offline, accessible regardless of income or digital access, and firmly rooted in trusted community networks that drive enrollment and retention.

Budget

Grants	
All Kids Play Grant	\$5,000
Growth to Expand Youth Sport Access Grant	\$2,500
Fundraising	
University of Michigan Coffee/Donut Sale	
3 Dozen Donuts (Meijer)	-\$30
2 Boxes of Coffee (Washtenaw Dairy)	-\$40
Table Signage	-\$10
Expected Revenue	\$250
Expected Profit	\$170
Pizza House Fundraiser	
Print Materials (Flyers)	\$20
Expected Revenue	\$135
Expected Profit	\$115
GoFundMe	
Expected Profit	\$100
Total Funds Raised (with Grants)	\$7,865
Expenses	
Social Media	
Account Creation (Instagram & Facebook)	\$0
Advertisement Development	\$200
Facebook - Advertisement Cost	\$500
Instagram - Advertisement Cost	\$500
Expected Cost	\$1,200
Community Outreach	
Printed Materials (Flyers, Posters, Business Cards, etc.)	\$800
Community Events Tabling	\$400
Partner Organization Outreach	\$300
Yard Signs (Near Enrollment Period)	\$300
Expected Cost	\$1,800
School Promotions - 13 Ypsilanti Area Schools	
Printed Materials (Flyers, Posters, etc.)	\$1,300
Access to School Advertisements/Newsletters	\$1,300
Expected Cost	\$2,600
Free "Try It" Days	
Equipment	\$300
Water Bottles	\$25
Printed Materials (Flyers)	\$75
Expected Cost	\$400
Season Kickoff Event	
Printed Materials (Flyers)	\$75
Water Bottles	\$25
Pizza	\$100
Expected Cost	\$200
Total Expected Cost	\$6,200
Total Profit	\$1,665

The Ypsilanti Youth Sports Initiative operates on a total budget of \$7,865 designed to fund both the acquisition of participants through strategic marketing and the initial program infrastructure necessary to deliver on our enrollment promises. This budget recognizes that for a startup community sports initiative targeting low-income families, marketing credibility depends on financial sustainability and the ability to actually deliver affordable programming. Our budget strategy combines grant funding, community fundraising, and targeted marketing to achieve our goal of enrolling 150 children by December 2026.

Revenue & Funding Strategy

Grant Funding: \$7,500

We've secured two grants that provide the financial backing for both program operations and marketing outreach. The All Kids Play Grant (\$5,000) and Growth to Expand Youth Sport Access Grant (\$2,500) specifically target initiatives that reduce financial barriers for low-income youth. These grants align with our mission and provide the funding necessary to carry out our marketing strategy without requiring immediate revenue from families.

Community Fundraising: \$465

Three grassroots fundraising campaigns will generate revenue while serving as marketing activities that build community awareness and engagement:

- **University of Michigan Coffee/Donut Sale (\$170 profit):** This event places our initiative directly in front of university students, faculty, and staff who represent potential volunteers, mentors, and community partners. The \$80 in material costs creates a lot of

activation that spreads awareness beyond our immediate target audience to potential supporters.

- **Pizza House Fundraiser (\$115 profit):** Partnering with a local Ypsilanti establishment for a fundraising night costs only \$20 in printed promotional flyers but generates both revenue and community.
- **GoFundMe Campaign (\$100 profit):** Digital crowdfunding extends our reach beyond face to face interactions, allowing extended family members, alumni, and community supporters to contribute. This zero cost marketing channel amplifies our message through social sharing.

Marketing Expenditure Breakdown

School Promotions: \$2,600 (42% of marketing spend)

Accessing our target demographic of 5-11 year-olds requires direct marketing to the 13 schools across the Ypsilanti area. We allocate \$1,300 for printed materials including flyers and posters that communicate our affordability, multi-sport access, and flexible payment options. An additional \$1,300 gives us access to school newsletters, digital communication platforms, and potential sponsors from school administrators. This will be for building parental trust in an underserved community where caution of new programs runs high.

Community Outreach: \$1,800 (29% of marketing spend)

Grassroots presence in the neighborhoods where our target families live and gather drives enrollment through trusted interactions. Printed materials (\$800) including flyers, posters, and business cards reach many people. This includes community centers, libraries, grocery stores, laundromats, and most other organizations. Tabling fees at community events (\$400) provide

direct parent engagement opportunities where we can answer questions or concerns. Yard signage (\$300) creates visual reminders during enrollment periods, intentionally placed near parks and high traffic areas where families with young children meet.

Social Media Marketing: \$1,200 (19% of marketing spend)

Digital advertising targets parents ages 25-40. We will allocate \$500 to each platform, plus \$200 for professional advertisement development that communicates our affordability message and community focus.

Promotional Events: \$600 (10% of marketing spend)

Experiential marketing through free trials (\$400) and season kick off events (\$200) allows potential participants and their parents to experience our programming firsthand before committing. These events require equipment rental, water bottles, and printed materials that demonstrate program quality and reduce risk for hesitant families. The experience converts interest into enrollment more effectively than any printed or digital message.

Budget Strategy

Our total marketing expenditure of \$6,200 represents 79% of our overall budget, with the remaining funds supporting the promotional events that bring marketing and program delivery together.

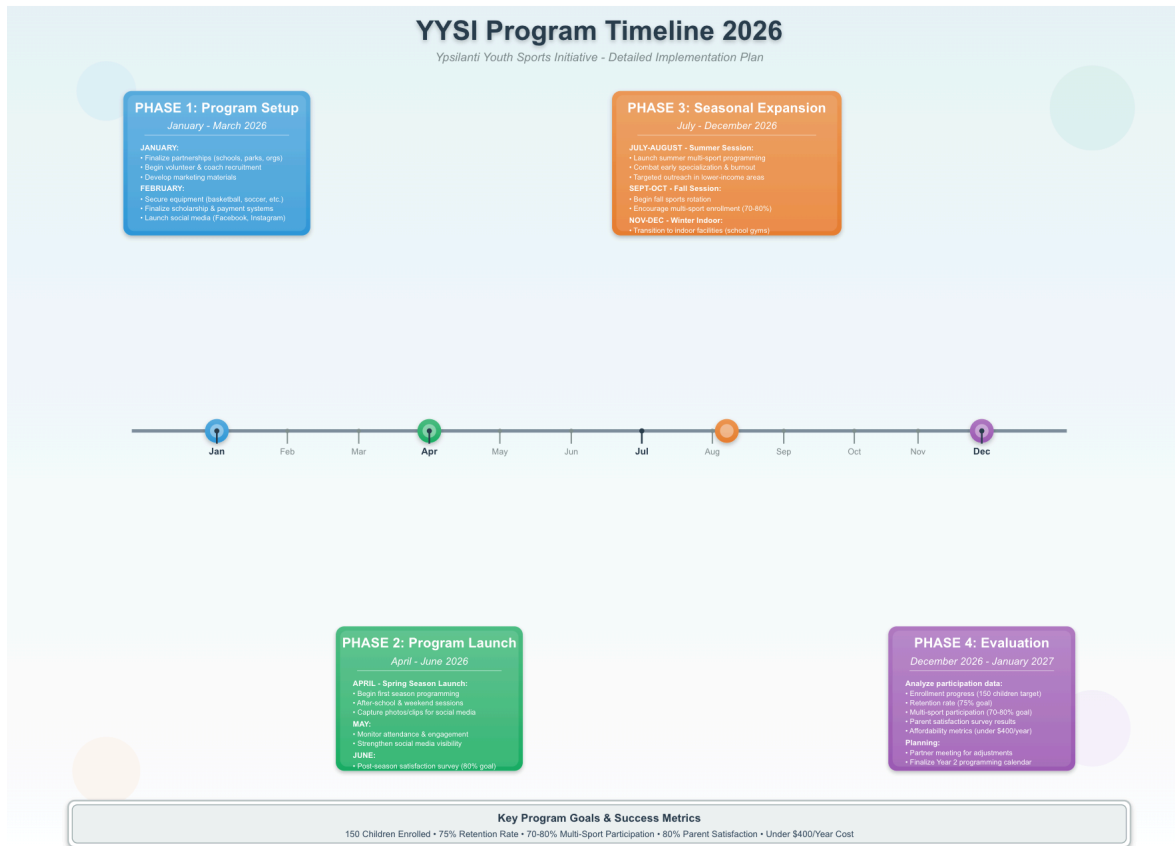
The budget achieves cost efficiency through three strategic principles:

1. **Hyperlocal Focus:** Every dollar targets the specific Ypsilanti geographic area rather than broad campaigns, boosting relevance and minimizing waste.

2. **Community Integration:** Fundraising events double as marketing connections, generating both revenue and awareness.
3. **Low-Income Media Consumption Patterns:** Heavy investment in school and community outreach meets our target audience and actually receives information, rather than expensive mass media that underserves low-income communities.

With \$7,865 in total funding and \$6,200 in marketing costs, we predict \$1,665 in remaining capital to address unforeseen marketing opportunities or challenges during our first enrollment cycle. This 21% contingency buffer allows us to respond to what works while maintaining our commitment to financial accessibility for participating families.

Implementation and Timeline



Phase 1: Program Setup (January – March 2026)

Goal: Build the operational and marketing foundation for launch.

January 2026

- Finalize partnerships with Ypsilanti Community Schools, local parks, and community organizations consistent with our focus on accessible, community-centered sports.
- Begin volunteer and coach recruitment, including outreach to university students and local community members. In particular, notifying MYSI of our season details and involvement opportunities for the University of Michigan club and members.
- Develop initial marketing materials such as fliers, school announcements, social media posts, and community center displays to reach both parents and youth.

February 2026

- Secure equipment for basketball, soccer, football, and baseball/softball to support multi-sport programming.
- Finalize scholarship and flexible payment systems, ensuring costs stay under the \$400 annual threshold aligned with affordability needs.
- Begin distributing promotional materials in schools, parks, community centers, and local high-traffic areas.
- Launch initial social media presence focused on building awareness among parents on Facebook and Instagram.

March 2026

- Conduct coach and volunteer training, emphasizing safety, youth engagement, and multi-sport instruction.
- Prepare facilities such as Ford Lake Park and school gyms for the first season of programming.
- Execute a final pre-launch marketing push to drive early registrations before the first season begins

Phase 2: Program Launch (April – June 2026)

Goal: Establish YYSI as an accessible, enjoyable, and affordable local option.

April 2026 – Spring Season Launch

- Begin the first season of programming, offering accessible, community-based multi-sport opportunities.
- Provide after-school and weekend programming to meet parent scheduling needs, as identified in the Situation Analysis.
- Capture program photos and short clips to support ongoing awareness-building on social media.
- Continue enrollment efforts to reach the initial goal of 150 children enrolled by December 2026.

May 2026

- Monitor attendance and engagement patterns, adjusting scheduling to minimize transportation and time barriers for families.
- Strengthen visibility through consistent social media activity and community presence in parks and local facilities.

June 2026

- Conclude the first season and distribute a post-season satisfaction survey, aiming for an 80% parent satisfaction rate regarding affordability, convenience, and child enjoyment.
- Use survey insights to refine the upcoming summer session.

Phase 3: Seasonal Expansion (July – December 2026)

Goal: Maintain engagement and support multi-sport participation throughout the year.

July – August 2026 – Summer Session

- Launch summer multi-sport programming that keeps children active during periods where time and transportation challenges are higher for low-income families.
- Continue promoting multi-sport involvement to combat early specialization and prevent burnout, consistent with national trends outlined in the Situation Analysis.
- Maintain targeted outreach in lower-income neighborhoods to grow participation.

September – October 2026 – Fall Session

- Begin the next seasonal rotation of sports, aligning with the start of the school year and offering after-school programming to help working parents.
- Continue digital and physical marketing efforts to appeal to both parents and children through schools, parks, and social media.

- Encourage multi-sport enrollment to support the objective that 70–80% of children participate in two or more sports annually.

November – December 2026 – Winter Indoor Session

- Transition programming to indoor facilities such as school gyms to maintain year-round engagement.
- Begin documenting participation trends, retention rates, and registration interests for the next calendar year.
- Host an end-of-year community event to reinforce the importance of local recreation and foster community pride.

Phase 4: Evaluation & Planning (December 2026 – January 2027)

Goal: Assess progress toward objectives and prepare for Year 2.

December 2026 – January 2027

- Analyze participation data, including:
 - Enrollment progress toward the target of 150 children
 - Retention rate goal of 75%
 - Multi-sport participation goal of 70–80%
 - Parent satisfaction survey results
- Review affordability metrics to ensure costs remain below \$400 annually per child, aligning with the average low-income sports budget.
- Hold a planning meeting with community partners to adjust sport offerings, scheduling, and marketing strategies based on insights from the first year.
- Finalize Year 2 programming calendar and partnership commitments.

Measurement and Metrics

To understand how well the Ypsilanti Youth Sports Initiative (YYSI) is supporting local families and meeting the goals that we have for the program, we'll track a set of clear and meaningful indicators throughout the year. These metrics tie directly to what we learned in our Situation Analysis. The focus includes the financial barriers families face in Ypsilanti, the lower participation rates in low-income communities, and the growing issues of early specialization and declining interest in other sports due to it. By focusing on these key areas, we'll be able to measure our progress in enrollment, retention, affordability, satisfaction, and multi-sport participation, thus ensuring that the program will meet the needs of the children and families we serve for years to come.

1. Enrollment Metrics

Objective: Enroll 150 children ages 5 to 11 from low-income Ypsilanti households by December 2026.

Metrics:

- Total number of registered participants each season.
- Growth in enrollment during each marketing phase (spring, summer, fall, winter).
- Percentage of participants from households earning under \$50,000 (reflects the alignment with our target audience)

Tracking the enrollment season-by-season will show whether our marketing strategies, such as school-based advertising, community fliers, and social media outreach effectively reaches

families facing barriers centered around the cost, transportation, and time that comes with playing sports.

2. Participant Retention

Objective: Achieve a 75% retention rate across the seasonal rotations.

Metrics:

- Percentage of children who return each season.
- Dropouts analyzed based on sport, season, scheduling, and other issues. All of which could lead to dropouts and based on this feedback and the results of our analysis, we can do what we must to ensure the highest participation rates.
- Correlation between retention and program elements such as affordability, accessibility, and convenience. These answers will come from mid season and post season surveys that will be sent out to each player's family, thus providing us a scope of how we can improve our product.

This metric helps address the national issue of declining youth retention and ensures that YYSI programs remain enjoyable, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate for all involved.

3. Multi-Sport Participation

Objective: Ensure that 75% of participants engage in two or more sports annually.

Metrics:

- Number of sports played per child recorded through registration data.

- Seasonal tracking of athletes shifting between sports.
- Comparison to the national average of 1.63 sports per child.

Because early specialization is a key driver of burnout and dropout in youth sports, an increase in multi-sport involvement indicates that the program is successfully creating opportunities for exploration and reducing specialization pressure. Through the ability and option to play 1 of 4 sports each season (depending on the season), we hope to ensure that no child is focusing on just one at such a young age.

4. Affordability & Financial Accessibility

Objective: Keep average annual program cost at or below \$400 per child.

Metrics:

- Average total cost per participant (fees + equipment).
- Number of families using scholarships or flexible payment options.
- Financial barriers reported in parent surveys.
- Elimination of Pay-to-Play model of Youth Sports

Maintaining affordability directly addresses the documented income-based participation gap and supports the program's mission to serve low-income Ypsilanti households. Rather than prioritizing profits at the youth sport level, we prioritize participation. With the support of the community, state, and University of Michigan's Youth Sport Initiative, we are able to push away from the play-to-play model and rather towards a system of participation for all.

5. Parent Satisfaction

Objective: Reach an 80% parent satisfaction rate related to affordability, convenience, and child enjoyment.

Metrics:

- Post-season survey scores assessing key areas:
 - Cost
 - Scheduling and accessibility
 - Child's enjoyment and confidence
 - Quality of coaching and communication
 - Transportation ability and location convenience
- Qualitative feedback on barriers, recommendations, and positive experiences.
- Track the amount of positive comments from parents that we collect and continue implementing those aspects in YYSI

A strong satisfaction score will indicate trust, program value, and the potential for sustained long-term engagement. By conducting this survey and maintaining the support of our parents, we can ensure that we produce the product that the children desire.

6. Social Media Growth & Engagement

Objective: Build social media presence by 1,000 followers per month with a 10% engagement rate.

Metrics:

- Monthly follower growth on Facebook and Instagram.
- Engagement rate (likes, shares, comments, saves).
- Performance of content types such as league fliers, game clips, and volunteer opportunities.

Tracking this ensures that YYSI reaches both youth and parents, especially as digital entertainment competes with sports participation. The use of a social media platform like Facebook targets the parents and older audience, while Instagram may be geared towards younger parents and older siblings who could potentially promote and persuade their families to sign up.

7. Community Impact Indicators

Objective: Strengthen local engagement and support long-term program sustainability.

Metrics:

- Number of local partnerships formed and maintained (schools, parks, organizations).
- Volunteer and coach participation levels, especially student volunteers from University of Michigan's Youth Sport Initiative.
- Utilization of community spaces such as revitalized parks and school gyms.

These indicators show whether YYSI is helping rebuild community recreation infrastructure and reducing barriers like transportation and parent time constraints. In doing so, also setting a standard for youth sports participation for years to come, with the hope of increasing participation.

8. Program Operations & Accessibility

Objective: Ensure consistent, reliable, and accessible programming for low-income families.

Metrics:

- Track weekly attendance rates, aiming for 80% average attendance across practices and games for the entirety of the league.
- Monitor seasonal schedule completion, targeting 100% of practices and games conducted as planned with minimal cancellations or rescheduling.
- Measure the impact of after-school and summer programming by tracking:
 - Percentage of participants attending after-school sessions (goal: at least 60 - 70%).
 - Parent feedback scores on how well the schedule reduces childcare or transportation burdens, therefore allowing us to tweak schedules for the following season based on the common trends of players and also highlighting changes that could be made for the same season in following years.
- Utilization of these numbers each season to confirm that programming fits the economic and scheduling realities of low-income families.

Regular tracking of these metrics ensures that the program remains aligned with the needs of families facing economic and logistical challenges.

Summary

Overall, these metrics help us understand not just how many kids are playing, but how well we're meeting the needs of families who often face the biggest barriers to youth sports. By

checking in at the end of every season, we can see what's working, what isn't, and what families need most. This ongoing evaluation allows us to adjust throughout the year and build a stronger, more sustainable program that keeps kids active, engaged, and excited to return each season.

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