

# teaching note

## *National Hockey League Scores Big with New Sustainability Program*

### Summary of the Case

The National Hockey League officially began in 1917 in Montreal, Canada, but players have been playing the sport long before that. For years, Canadian and US players have grown up playing and practicing on frozen ponds; however, climate change and other environmental issues are threatening the conditions needed to continue playing. Changing climates and increased resource constraints have also impacted the hockey industry as a whole. Because of this, the NHL is striving to reduce its impact and protect the origin of the sport by implementing the NHL Green initiative. NHL Green's main goals are to work towards improving natural and man-made environments where hockey is played by advocating for sustainable innovation and community development.

While the NHL has made great improvements in tracking their impacts, reducing energy consumption, water usage, and waste, they have encountered several obstacles along the way. These include lack of awareness and lack of support from the public along with dispute within the political environment that has complicated some initiatives started by NHL Green. Today the political environment is very skeptical of allocating time or resources to issues with climate change. It isn't considered a priority and therefore does not receive the support it needs. This makes it difficult for organizations who are taking sustainable initiatives but do not have the legislative support to back them up. Even with these obstacles, the NHL is still working to expand its efforts by reaching out to local ice rinks about ways they can reduce operating costs and improve their environmental impact. Though there is still progress to be made, the NHL Green initiative has already had a promising and powerful impact that should continue to promote environmental awareness and sustainability initiatives.

### Target Audience

This case study focuses on practices that can be put into place to make the sporting industry more sustainable. The concept can be understood at all learning levels and can potentially be taught from different viewpoints. Undergraduate professors can refer to this case study to instruct students about how the environment is affected by the sporting industry, and graduate level professors can have students analyze the NHL's practices to see how they can be adapted and applied to other sports.

### Teaching Objectives

Based on the sustainability issues presented in this case study, the teaching objectives are to:

- Understand environmental issues that pose a threat to hockey
- Recognize the impact NHL Green has on helping facilities be-

come more sustainable

- Understand the impact community has in supporting the organization's sustainability efforts.

### Learning Outcomes

This case study is intended to provide students with a better understanding of how environmental issues and events and activities many students participate in, including sports, correlate. After reading this case study, students should have a basic understanding of and be able to recognize the following concepts:

- Explain what NHL Green is and demonstrate knowledge of specific environmental initiatives and programs they have started.
- Analyze the efforts of NHL Green and determine their impact on the environment
- Brainstorm additional initiatives that could enhance or improve NHL Green
- Analyze internal and external issues and identify potential problems and solutions for events and activities that are similar to NHL games.

### Recommended Teaching Approach

This case study can be adjusted to meet multiple course objectives an instructor may want to teach. We recommend that instructors break this study into two teaching sessions. In the first session, instructors should provide a general background on environmental issues our world is facing and use this as a time to introduce the concept that there are multiple actions that we can make that we may not consider that can be turned into sustainable practices. The instructor should also highlight that the sporting industry has a larger impact on the environment than we may realize.

Next, the instructor should give a brief background on the NHL and why clean water is important to keep their sport going. The instructor would benefit from the use of both verbal and visual presentations for this session, thus providing students with a visualization of the impact the NHL makes and what the numbers represent. After discussing why sustainable practices are important to the NHL, it is recommended that instructors focus on tangible lifestyle changes that promote a healthy environment and how they do so.

The second session should be about the ways the NHL has gone about making their sport more environmentally friendly. We recommend looking into what efforts the NHL has put in place that have made the sport more eco-friendly. This is also a good opportunity to break the class up into groups, with each group focusing on a specific effort (i.e., effort to reduce carbon emissions, conserve water, or

raise awareness), and to analyze and discuss NHL practices and their outcomes. This could then lead to a class discussion where everyone shares their findings with the class.

After this activity, the instructor should have students look at the internal and external issues associated with NHL Green and analyze the information presented. Instructors can re-assign student groups to brainstorm ideas about how the NHL can overcome these issues and share their ideas with the class. After this is done, the instructor can use any remaining time to wrap up and reflect on what the students think of the NHL's efforts, what they learned, and what they would add to improve or change what the NHL is already doing.

After completing all sessions, individuals should be able to summarize what they have learned and add their own perspective of the case study. Following are some questions that could help lead discussions:

- What are some of the environmental initiatives that have been successful in NHL Green?
- What are possible solutions to the internal and external issues that NHL Green currently faces?
- What is one way you could support NHL Green as a student at your University?
- How could other Professional Sports Leagues follow in NHL Green's example and make their own sport more environmentally friendly? What are some similarities and differences?

## Analysis of Teaching Objectives

The primary focus of this case study was to learn about the efforts of the NHL Green initiative and assess the impact of those efforts. This case study further addressed stressors that limit the impact of NHL Green and how the public can get involved.

## Additional Readings and Supplemental Videos

- Schmidtke, A. (2018). March marks NHL's sustainability initiative. Retrieved March 13, 2019, from <https://greensportsalliance.org/march-marks-nhls-sustainability-initiative/>
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- [NHL Green] (2019, April 5). NHL celebrates green month. [Video file]. Retrieved April 12, 2019, from <https://www.nhl.com/video/nhl-celebrates-green-month/t-287089000/c-67503803>

Schram, C. (2018). Green business is good business for the National Hockey League. Retrieved April 12, 2019, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolschram/2018/05/10/green-business-is-good-business-for-the-national-hockey-league/#1ef0df8e27b5>

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