EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
PUTTING WOMEN’S FOOTBALL ON THE MAP

ONTARIO WOMEN'S INTERCOLLEGIATE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

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The Ontario Women’s Intercollegiate Football Association (OWIFA) is a not-for-profit league organized and run by women’s flag football programs at universities across Ontario. Our league consists of over 400 athletes and 70 coaches that participate in women’s flag football programs at 10 universities across the province. The women’s football season includes four, two-day tournaments during the months of February and March.

Women’s football has grown extensively over the last few years including, an improvement in the quality of programs and increased engagement of our game. Our athletes are advocates for women in sport. We are working towards equitable opportunities for women in competitive flag football. Sports organizations are far behind in recognizing football as a sport for women, especially in Ontario University Athletics. There is an undeniable interest in the game and the number of athletes and spectators of our league is a testament to how far we have grown. For women’s football to be taken seriously at the intercollegiate and varsity level, we need institutions to become a part of the conversation and support women in the game. We need Athletic Directors and Clubs Coordinators elevating the experience of women in football and encouraging equal opportunity in the sport.

Universities need to commit to women in football. In the United States, flag football has been adopted as a varsity sport at the high school and the post-secondary level. It is due time for Canada to follow suit. On behalf of our coaches and athletes, OWIFA asks for universities across the province to include women’s flag football under their sport models. We additionally invite national and provincial sport organizations as well as corporations to invest in the game. We want to work collaboratively over the next years to make this possible.

Please find our executive summary on the success of this league and its programming since 2019. We provide an outline of league metrics, rules and regulations, safety measures, and finances. Full details can be found in our documents here.
ABOUT US

Founded in 2018, the Ontario Women’s Intercollegiate Football Association (OWIFA) is a student-led and operated football association by women across Ontario. Given that football is one of the only sports without a women’s counterpart in university athletics across Canada, women student-leaders and athletes in football created OWIFA to provide women with the opportunity to play flag football competitively in university. OWIFA is built on advancing gender equity in football, and advocates for the sanctioning of women’s football as a university sport.

VISION

OWIFA strives to enrich the university experience of women through equitable football opportunities that foster a diverse and inclusive environment. As an organization created and led by women, for women, we encourage career development through football and engage women to stay physically active throughout their academic careers.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

- Voted members by university teams across the province
- Provides guidance to teams and structure for competition including guidelines, the rulebook, and programming
- Promotes the league, its athletes, members, and events on our social media platforms
- Managed by women for women student-athletes

KEY GOALS

No. 01 — Football Development
Provide a competitive flag football experience for post-secondary women across Ontario.

No. 02 — Knowledge Development
Increase football knowledge, expertise, and strategy of women

No. 03 — Community
Foster a supportive community that encourages leadership development, companionship, and positive physical and mental health through football.

No. 03 — Diversity & Inclusion
Offer a diverse and inclusive sporting experience for women
10 University Teams

- Western University: Unsanctioned
- Laurier University: Sanctioned Athletics & Recreation
- University of Waterloo: Sanctioned Athletics & Recreation
- York University: Sanctioned Athletics & Recreation
- University of Toronto: Sanctioned Student Council/Union
- McMaster University: Sanctioned Athletics & Recreation
- Guelph Region: Unsanctioned
- Queen’s University: Sanctioned Athletics & Recreation
- UOIT: Sanctioned Athletics & Recreation
- University of Windsor: Sanctioned Student Council/Union

Our Athletes

A total of 414 women university athletes

66 Women as team executives

121 Girls high school football teams in Ontario for recruitment

Our Coaches

A total of 71 student & volunteer coaches

9 Coaches who are women

48 Tournament coaching hours
Moderated by OWIFA executive members, this action-packed weekend included three panels geared towards athletes, coaches, and community members looking to learn more about the football industry and career development. The panel themes included: Football Operations; Media, Analysts & Broadcasting; and Coaching & Training Staff.

90 participants

**No. 02 — OWIFA Virtual Event Series, 2020-2021**

This virtual event series included 3 free online workshops showcasing local businesses and professionals, fostering the development of well-rounded student-athletes. The workshops consisted of; Performance Nutrition 101, Mental Health in Sport, and a Strength, Power, & Agility Bootcamp. 50 participants

**No. 03 — OWIFA Women in Football Careers Weekend, 2021**

Moderated by OWIFA executive members, this action-packed weekend included three panels geared towards athletes, coaches, and community members looking to learn more about the football industry and career development. The panel themes included: Football Operations; Media, Analysts & Broadcasting; and Coaching & Training Staff. 90 participants

**No. 04 — OWIFA Virtual Cup, 2021**

This event substituted what would have been the start to the 2021 season. The OWIFA Cup consisted of various team and individual challenges introduced to our participants through our OWIFA Instagram and Facebook platforms. Teams were given points based on the completion of challenges, tallying to a grand total at the end of the month. 100 participants

**No. 05 — Redline Athletics Strength, Power, & Agility Bootcamps, 2021**

Redline Athletics and Coach Brendt Barrett hosted monthly Zoom bootcamps for OWIFA athletes incorporating football-specific movements and material about the importance of adequate hydration. 100 participants
Eligibility to Compete: Teams & Athletes

Teams are eligible to compete if they are a sanctioned program or provided written consent by their university athletics/recreation department or student council/union to compete. Additionally, teams must provide official documentation that each athlete is a student or registered member of a university women's football program. All teams must be insured and have a documented constitution and/or policies to ensure their programs follow ethical standards, ensure the safety of their athletes, and follow university protocol.

Note: Unsanctioned programs must show that they are working towards ratification with their university. Unsanctioned programs must provide proof of enrollment for each athlete.

Athletes are eligible provided they are registered students as "full-time" or "part-time" by the academic regulations of their respective university or are registered in a minimum of two half courses (or the equivalent: 6 credit hours) in at least one term (semester) in the school year in which they are competing. Graduate students and students completing an internship or co-operative program within the school year of competition are eligible to compete. There is no cap on the number of years of eligibility.

- Sanctioned teams that allow for non-student members must be registered with the sanctioned program and meet university and team guidelines to compete.

Bid to Host a Tournament

Tournaments each season are hosted from the last weekend of February to the last weekend of March. The last tournament is deemed the OWIFA Championship Tournament. All dates are decided by the OWIFA Executive Board in advance of the school year at the League General Meeting (~mid-to-late August) and approved by teams.

- All teams must provide their intent to host a tournament by completing a Tournament Application form by mid-October

To qualify as a host institution, the following requirements must be met:

- Identify a tournament location that must have at least two OWIFA fields or one regulation-sized Canadian Football field that allows for cleats. Uprights are preferred, but not mandatory.
- Provide adequate event staff (2 on-site) and officials (2-3 per field) to execute the event
- Ensure first-aid responders are present and on-site at all times during the tournament
- Provide an anticipated budget and estimated cost for teams to register using the OWIFA Tournament Budget Tool

A team wishing to host the Championship Tournament must also meet the following criteria:

- Support OWIFA in finding a banquet venue
- Apply for funding with the help of OWIFA
- Coordinate with their university to allow for 2-4 onsite sponsors and food vendors
The Game

OWIFA competes in 11v11, 4-down, contact-flag football which includes an offensive and defensive line. This allows for a more dynamic game with similar concepts to tackle football, but safer, and the inclusion of women of all body types and athleticism. Lineswomen are allowed to block between the shoulders and waist within the tackle box. All skilled positions are flagged only. Games include 30-minute halves and a 5-minute halftime. Fields run the width of a regulation-sized Canadian football field (45x40 yards). Full rules and regulations can be found here.

Coaches

Coaches must be held to an ethical standard and have proper OWIFA training to be on the football field. A given institution may offer guidelines for teams to bring on coaching staff. OWIFA encourages and mentors female coaches. OWIFA fosters young future coaches to support women in football, this can include university or college students and community volunteers. In 2020, we had 71 student and volunteer coaches support our athletes.

30-days prior to the first tournament date of a given season, all coaches must complete the following:

- Create an NCCP Coach Account
- eLearning NCCP - Safe Sport, Direct Athlete Contact (Free - 1 hr)
- OWIFA Contact-Flag Football Rulebook Training (30 min to 1 hour) - Zoom and a quiz

Officials

Officials are responsible for maintaining a safe environment on the football field. Officials are often student volunteers recruited by a host team or hired by an institution's intramural flag-football program. Prior to a given tournament, officials are required to watch a video about the rulebook and complete an online quiz (80% minimum to pass) via the OWL online platform. Additionally, officials are asked to complete the eLearning NCCP modules, Making Headway in Football and Safe Sport (Direct Athlete Contact). All scores are recorded via a game scoresheet and reported to the host tournament staff. A minimum of 2 officials must be present at each game. An officials crew of 6-10 is needed per tournament.

OWIFA Executive Board members are present at all tournaments to ensure the Code of Conduct is upheld and scoring/ranking are accurate at the end of each tournament day.
Physical Wellbeing and Mental Health

Commitment to safety: In 2022, OWIFA will be implementing a system to track and record all injuries at each tournament using online software like Player's Health Rehab.

Free Online Seminars - Workshops are made accessible on our website year-round.

- **Mental performance training workshop** - A virtual seminar on anxiety in sport including ways to deal with anxiety pre, during, and post-competition and ways to adequately address failure.
  - Hosted by Dr. Austin Wade Wilson, a Mental Performance Consultant, and lecturer at the University of Waterloo

- **Sports Nutrition 101** - A virtual workshop that discusses eating patterns in recovery, training, and in the off-season to enhance sports performance.
  - Hosted by Aja Gyimah, a Registered Dietician and former Western Mustang Volleyball Athlete

Code of Conduct

The OWIFA Code of Conduct and Ethics mission is to develop all members of the league as having good character and leadership through high-level football competition. The Code applies to all Members, Administrators, Participants, and Coaches, who have the responsibility of conducting themselves in a manner consistent with the principles of the Code. The principles include but are not limited to, treating individuals fairly and responsibly, respecting others without discrimination, and adhering to all other laws and regulations as applicable. Student-Athletes should also report any incidents that breach the Code through our Incident Reporting Form. Coaches are required to acknowledge the power imbalance of their position and must not violate the expected standards of conduct.

OWIFA stands in solidarity with all members of our community who experience marginalization, oppression, and threat based on their identity, ethnicity, and physical appearance. We condemn any form of prejudice, stigmatization, or racism. To continue to listen, learn, and act, we have partnered with organizations to better support OWIFA members of equity-deserving groups.

Discipline Policy

All breaches of the code of conduct/ethics can be reported through the OWIFA Incident Reporting Form made available year-round.

- In the event of an incident:
  - Three (3) OWIFA executives and two (2) school representatives with no conflict of interest will form the OWIFA Incident Review Board (OIRB), which will review the report based on evidence and determine a course of action. All reports are confidential and depending on the severity of the report, the OIRB has a responsibility to refer to any appropriate bodies (ex. government authorities, institutional reporting systems, etc).

*This policy is not meant to replace and/or negate a university's specific code and/or standard of behaviour. All incidents within a given team will be consulted and reported to a university's discipline office.
Our league is a not-for-profit organization. All remaining revenue is applied to programming for the following year. All finances are controlled and maintained by the OWIFA Financial Officer and League Commissioner. Any purchase requires approval by the Executive Board and a two-signature sign-off from both the Financial Officer and Commissioner.

A team, organization, or individual must submit funding requests through owifa.womensfootball@gmail.com and must include justification for funding, an invoice, and receipts:
- Funding requests will be processed by the OWIFA Financial Officer and approved by the executive board
- Once these expenses/donations have been approved they are recorded under the Finances → League expenses/donations folder
- All financial transactions are made through the OWIFA bank account with BMO (Financial Officer and League Commissioner have access to this account)

**Budget Outline (detailed version here)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tournament Costs</td>
<td>Cost to book field time, hire officials, and order championship gear</td>
<td>14,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banquet</td>
<td>Championship tournament event to celebrate our athletes</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Equipment Packages</td>
<td>Flags, footballs, and mouth guards for teams</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCP Training</td>
<td>Coach certification</td>
<td>11,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill/Professional Development</td>
<td>Workshops, combines, and officials training</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>36,920</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Revenue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tournament Registration</td>
<td>$500 per team (10) to register at 4 tournaments</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorships</td>
<td>Estimate from previous years</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>WISE Grant (confirmed)</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League Athlete Fees</td>
<td>$25 per athlete in a league of 400</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>37,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Profit**

| Total Profit           |                                     | 80      |
Our needs

- Sanction all women's football programs at a given university that have shown evidence of success and continued interest in the game of women's football under athletics and recreation (not student councils or unions).
- Commit to providing teams with adequate coaching staff or training for student and volunteer coaches (NCCP certification).
- Provide information on resources for athletic therapy as well as academic, physical, and mental wellness support for athletes.
- Provide reduced rates for field bookings and administrative support when hosting tournaments (note that tournaments bring in over 500 OWIFA members and fans).
- Support equity, diversity, and inclusion training for men's and women's football athletes.
- Offer financial support for teams by way of reducing administrative fees (field bookings, jersey costs, coach travel) or providing a one-time equipment package (flags, balls, cones).
- Meet with the OWIFA executive board at least once per academic year to provide guidance or feedback on programming. This will ensure that all parties are on the same page.

Questions to help OWIFA structure its programming to the standards of each university

1. What expectations surrounding communication with your department, do you have for our league?

2. What is the biggest barrier (if any) to expanding women's football as a sport under your athletic department?

3. How can we attain sponsorships? Where are we limited?

4. How can we move under a Provincial Sporting Organization and how do we consult with your institution on joining a Provincial Sporting Organization?

5. Do you have any safety concerns about our sport & do you have any suggestions for mitigation?

6. Do you have any suggestions for rule enforcements at tournaments (ie. certified officials) & is that something that the school will be able to assist with?
Thank you to our executive board, teams, and coaches for their efforts in supporting university women's football programs across the province. Our group is supported by members of the Ontario athletics community who have made our programming possible.

Please contact owifa.womensfootball@gmail.com for any additional information or to collaborate. Photo credits to Rob Martin, Jeff Chan, Fazlur-Rehman, and Michael P. Hall.

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY**

- Donated ~$1000 to support local organizations (Uof T women’s football supported the Breast Cancer Society of Canada)
- Advised on two committees including Football Canada’s Diversity Task Force and Ontario Football’s Female Football Committee
- Supported 4 youth initiatives - 2 High School Football Clinics, Olympic Dreams Day at Western University (Grades 3-6), NYE with the Kids with the City of London

**OWIFA IN THE NEWS**

OWIFA was also featured in 5 articles in 2021. Some notable mentions include:

- The Queen’s Journal: Women’s football becomes ratified club at Queen’s, breaking new barriers
- Toronto Argonauts: Ontario Women’s football is growing fast
- Western Gazette: Western women’s football team marches on without varsity status