

TEAM



aaf national student advertising competition

TEAM: 403

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Football League (NFL) is a cultural powerhouse, recognized for athletic skill, high-stakes performance, and commercial entertainment. Football is built on teamwork and collective strength, yet the league has not demonstrated as much cohesion off the field as it has on it. Casual fans enjoy the game, but they don't recognize the NFL's meaningful investments in their communities because its youth initiatives lack visible alignment and cohesive messaging. Many meaningful efforts feel separate rather than an essential part of the NFL's mission. As a result, the NFL's role as a tangible force for good remains underrecognized, and its efforts fail to reach casual fans who need them most.

The NFL has an opportunity to increase awareness and engagement in its youth wellness initiatives while strengthening brand perception among casual fans.

At its core, this challenge reflects a broader cultural reality of disconnection, as many youth and casual fans feel a growing sense of isolation. Overburdened and undersupported, they can spiral into further withdrawal.

So we decided to break the cycle.

The "Team NFL" campaign unifies the league's youth initiatives under a single, clear direction, repositioning the NFL as a structured support system that strengthens communities through mentorship, belonging, and encouragement. By elevating stories that emphasize growth over perfection and creating clearer, more accessible pathways to resources, Team NFL transforms awareness into engagement and perception into trust. In doing so, the NFL becomes more than a league defined by competition. It becomes the unifying force behind the next generation, harnessing the power of football to bring communities together through collective strength and purpose.

The NFL will help change our divided culture by creating a team that everyone can belong to, no matter their background or struggles.

Different Stories, One Team. Team NFL



Look here to see the key insights guiding our campaign.

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RESEARCH STATS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 860 Survey Responses | 753 Social Listening Posts Viewed |
| 151 Interview Participants | 105 Man-on-the-Street Interviews |
| 74 Focus Group Participants | 13 Ethnographies |

TOTAL: 1,957

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

CALL THE CROWD

Increase awareness of NFL partners and programs by 25% by the end of the 2026 football season.

LEAD BEYOND THE FIELD

Lift brand perception by 15% among those who view the campaign.

RECRUIT OUR TEAMMATES

Increase intent to join an NFL partner or program to 65% among target audience.

UNIFYING
THREAD

THE DISCONNECT

We live in an age when youth have never had more access to connection. And yet, the very tools built to bring us together are quietly pulling us apart. We want to help this generation navigate something no generation has faced before: **a world where you can be surrounded by voices, and feel entirely alone.**

INCREASING ISOLATION

Casual fans are navigating a high-pressure, digital-first environment. Burdened by overwhelming responsibilities and shrinking free time, they feel **weighed down by expectations**, causing them to retreat from others.

“

The more they isolate, the fewer social skills they have, and the fewer skills they have, the more they isolate. It's a loop.

”

Laura Huntzinger,
Licensed Clinical
Health Care
Worker [36]

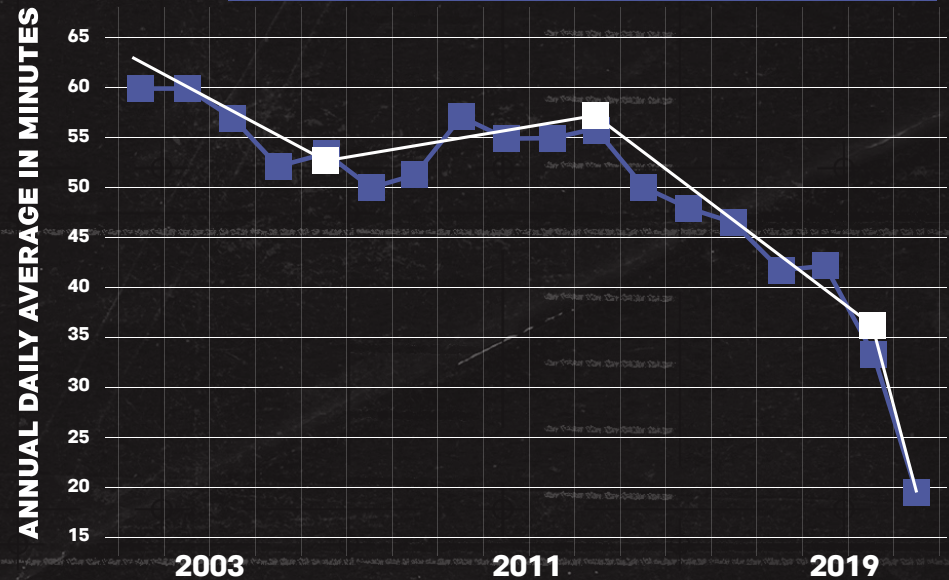
[37] SOCIAL ISOLATION



MOUNTING PRESSURE

Many youth measure their self-worth by outcomes rather than effort, eroding confidence and placing excess pressure on themselves. At the same time, parents and caregivers are overwhelmed, believing it is solely their responsibility to solve their child's every problem. This mutual stress can cause a disconnect between youth and parents. While **93% of parents believe their teen is adequately supported, only 58.5% of teens report consistently receiving the social and emotional support they need.** This gap deepens feelings of isolation on both sides. [86]

[37] FRIENDS SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



"I felt pressure from friends and coaches to be a better player or not miss a practice or learn more about the game. I quit football because it became more of a chore than it was fun." **Kanoa, 16 [38]**

UNIFYING THREAD

Expectation drives disconnection. Casual fans of all ages feel the strain of daily pressures, pulling them away from shared experiences and community, creating a cycle of retreat and social withdrawal.

THE LINEUP

Meet the **GAMECHANGERS**: Overwhelmed by the pressure to be their absolute best, Gamechangers are searching for momentum and guidance to reclaim what matters most: friendship, excitement, and the support that helps them thrive.

THE IMPRESSIONABLES

Ages 8-13



FEEL PRESSURE TO:

Be on the same level as their peers.

CAN CHANGE THE GAME BY:

Focusing on having fun rather than comparing themselves to others.

“
Sometimes I feel like I'm not fitting in, and I don't want to be there. I have to hold myself to this standard or people will judge me.
Alexander, 11 [3]”

45% of girls say they feel pressure to fit in socially. [55]

THE ANTICIPATORS

Ages 14-18



FEEL PRESSURE TO:

Navigate rising expectations and make decisions that shape their identity.

CAN CHANGE THE GAME BY:

Exploring their sense of self despite pressure to specialize and be overly committed.

“
I think people have put a lot of pressure on kids to specialize or to decide their track really young and there is a lot less opportunity for kids to try out new things.
Morgan, 35 [46]”

88% of parents are extremely concerned about their children having jobs and careers as they enter adulthood. [43]

THE EMPATHIZERS

Caring Adults



FEEL PRESSURE TO:

Be everything and everyone all at once for their kids.

CAN CHANGE THE GAME BY:

Normalizing that failure is part of the growth process.

“
Parenting takes a village. It was never meant to be done alone.
Kristen Miller, Director of Education [77]”

65% of parents feel they take sole responsibility for their children's health and well-being. [32]

UNIFYING THREAD

As the Gamechangers fight against these expectations and pressures, they desire connection above all. Unity is the only force strong enough to break the vicious isolation loop.

WHAT DO THE GAMECHANGERS WANT?

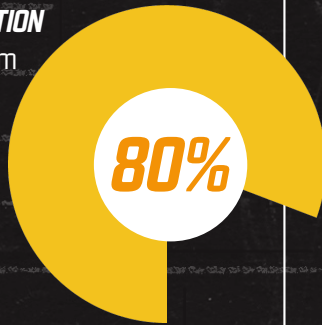
Now that we've met the Gamechangers, let's dive deeper into what they desire and what makes them tick.

FRIENDSHIP

The Gamechangers crave opportunities to be involved, make friends, and find joy through relationships. To the Gamechangers, working together with others is essential to their overall health and well-being.

WHY KIDS DESIRE CONNECTION

As teens gain autonomy from parents, they begin turning to friends as their first line of support, with **80%** of teens reporting that friends influence what sports they play. [33]



[53]

FUN

At the heart of Gamechangers' decision making is the desire to have fun. This heavily influences the way they choose extracurriculars, sports, and pastimes.

WHY YOUTH PRIORITIZE HAVING FUN

Adolescents who report enjoyment rather than pressure are significantly more likely to remain committed to their sport and demonstrate positive mental health outcomes. [59]

TOP MOTIVATIONS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES [16]



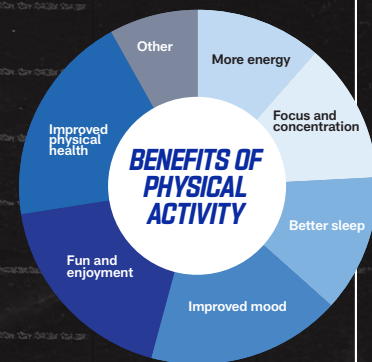
"One thing I'd change about sports is making them more fun. I know people always say, 'It doesn't matter, just go have fun,' but it never feels sincere when they say it." Ella, 17 [17]

GROWTH

The Gamechangers often highlight how important it is to learn from mistakes, focus on their growth, and reflect on their self-improvement, seeking out opportunities that help them to grow and become better.

WHY YOUTH CRAVE GROWTH

54% say they have been encouraged to work harder at their own sport. [34]



[53]

"I feel like [sports] are just like a way to grow as an individual mentally and physically." Avery, 13 [5]

"Right now it feels like messing up is a crime. I just want to feel like I can grow." Tyson, 16 [80]

"I stuck with playing football because my teammates became my best friends." Trevor, 15 [79]

"...I have a membership there, and I meet up with the parents during the week too. And it has also brought me a sense of community and a sense of connection." Gena, 39 [25]

UNIFYING THREAD

Gamechangers desire reassurance that their self-worth isn't measured by the scoreboard, but by the love of the game.

NFL INTERCEPTION

Gamechangers need an environment that brings them together more than ever. A space where they feel seen, supported, and part of something bigger than themselves. **The NFL is that place.** By surrounding youth with mentorship, encouragement, and shared experiences rooted in teamwork, the league doesn't just teach them how to play, it teaches them how to show up for one another when they need each other most.

THE IMPRESSIONABLES

During a time when everything feels judgmental, the **Impressionables** need a secure environment where they can be embraced for being themselves.

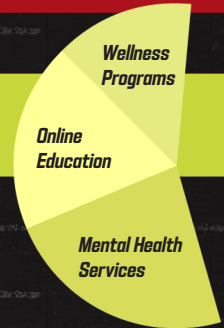
NFL INTERCEPTION: The NFL has spaces where they feel comfortable enough to play and participate without constant judgement.



Secure surroundings and outlets for physical activity are essential conditions for children to survive and thrive. [84]



"I can be myself in a place where I have friends and not people who I think might judge me. Somewhere everyone feels like they can be themselves, not just me, but everyone there feels okay to be real." **Emery, 13** [18]



PREFERRED SUPPORT TYPES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN [60]

THE ANTICIPATORS

Anticipators look toward the future with both anxiety and excitement. Without meaningful opportunities to explore their identity, it's difficult for them to feel inspired.

NFL INTERCEPTION: The NFL provides a structured, supportive environment where teens explore beyond just performance, helping them grow into their future with clarity and confidence.



Because adolescents are still forming their identities, opportunities to explore different environments and experiences can help shape healthier decision-making skills. [57]



"Inherently, athletics seems like something anybody should be able to explore the economy of, but sports and athletics don't actually allow that." **Danielle, 47** [14]

THE EMPATHIZERS

Empathizers need a supportive community that reminds them they do not have to carry everything alone.

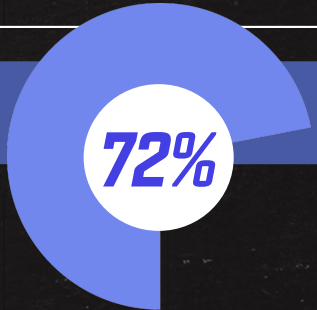
NFL INTERCEPTION: The NFL provides a shared space where parents feel connected to other families, supported by coaches and mentors, and reassured that growth includes setbacks.



When parents feel backed by a community, their stress drops, their mental health improves, and their kids do better too. [1; 35; 54]



"It is just so nice to have awesome coaches in your child's corner. She learns so much more when it's not all from me." **Ashley, 43** [4]



PARENTS OPEN TO YOUTH PROGRAMS LED BY PRO FOOTBALL LEAGUE [53]

UNIFYING THREAD

The NFL is the hero in the Gamechangers' lives by offering spaces for them to come together and grow.

MOTIVATE THE SWITCH

HOW WILL WE TALK TO THE GAMECHANGERS?

The NFL's partners and programs are about making everyone feel like they belong. Communicating with our audience should highlight that beyond running programs, the NFL creates spaces that are filled with support, connection, and excitement.

WHAT ARE THEY SEEKING?

Sports stick with kids when they're fun and focused on character, not just competition. When the focus is development over winning, sports become a source of relief, not stress—because youth value authenticity over perfection. [2]

Adolescents who report enjoyment rather than pressure are significantly more likely to remain committed to their sport and demonstrate positive mental health outcomes. [59]

"I love when athletes or public figures talk about their personal experiences. You forget that professional athletes are people too, that they struggle and fail. I really like when people talk about failing, getting denied, and continuing anyway." Charity, 18 [10]

TEAM NFL WILL:

GET:

The Gamechangers, who feel pressure to be their absolute best

91% of high school athletes reported stress due to playing their sport, and about 60% experienced moderate to extreme stress levels. [82]

91%

TO:

See the NFL is about more than just winning

72% of parents report that "having fun" is the most important goal for their children in sports, ranking it higher than winning or elite performance. [87]

BY:

Showcasing the support and community it offers them

"Friends keep my daughter from quitting sports. They persuade her." Lucia, 43 [40]

UNIFYING THREAD

By showing vulnerability, professional athletes can create a culture where supporting one another and asking for help feels normal, making Gamechangers feel less alone and more connected.



**DIFFERENT STORIES,
ONE TEAM.**

THERE IS NOTHING MORE UNIFYING THAN A TEAM.

*The NFL stands as a cultural pillar with the means to create **lasting good in the lives of children.** They're already utilizing their extensive partners and programs to aid in a wide array of issues. Now they can use their persuasive power to leverage the strongest force for the well-being of youth:*

THE UNIFYING POWER OF A TEAM.

The NFL is already fueled by fan commitment to their favorite teams. It's time to return that support by **showing that Team NFL is here for their communities.** By using the same team-building tactics that create feelings of community and belonging among millions of Americans, the NFL can support youth in overcoming barriers of social isolation and disconnection.

Framing the NFL as being part of the same team as the Gamechangers, our campaign demonstrates that commitment goes beyond the game. Through "Different Stories, One Team," Team NFL creates a **SPACE FOR ACTIVE BELONGING**, uniting youth from all backgrounds as teammates, not just spectators, and supporting who they are and who they're becoming.

CREATIVE STRATEGY



The Team NFL logo is designed to resemble a team huddle, symbolizing unity and collaboration.

Our creative strategy centers on **teamwork, unity, and community**. The campaign highlights the power of people coming together through the concept **Team NFL**. The campaign celebrates how **many different individuals and programs connect to form one larger team**. By highlighting NFL programs working together, the campaign reinforces the idea that **the NFL brings people together** and creates a shared sense of belonging.



DESIGN SYSTEM

The visual design reflects movement, energy, and connection.

Curved lines are used throughout the visuals to represent the movement and excitement of youth. Different lines in different colors echo our tagline, representing different stories and walks of life. As these lines intersect and overlap, they symbolize moments of interconnectedness.

Bold, playful colors create excitement and appeal to young audiences.

League Indigo		Endzone Crimson		Grass Stain Chartreuse		Penalty Yellow	
R	75	R	227	R	200	R	244
G	89	G	33	G	213	G	195
B	164	B	44	B	61	B	32
C	81	C	4	C	26	C	5
M	73	M	99	M	3	M	22
Y	2	Y	93	Y	94	Y	98
K	0	K	0	K	0	K	0
#	4b59a4	#	e3212c	#	c8d53d	#	f4c320

CONNECTION TO STRATEGY

The creative strategy emphasizes youth engagement, community, and the excitement of football. By connecting multiple stories under the idea of Team NFL, the campaign visually and emotionally reinforces the message that the NFL unites everyone into one team.

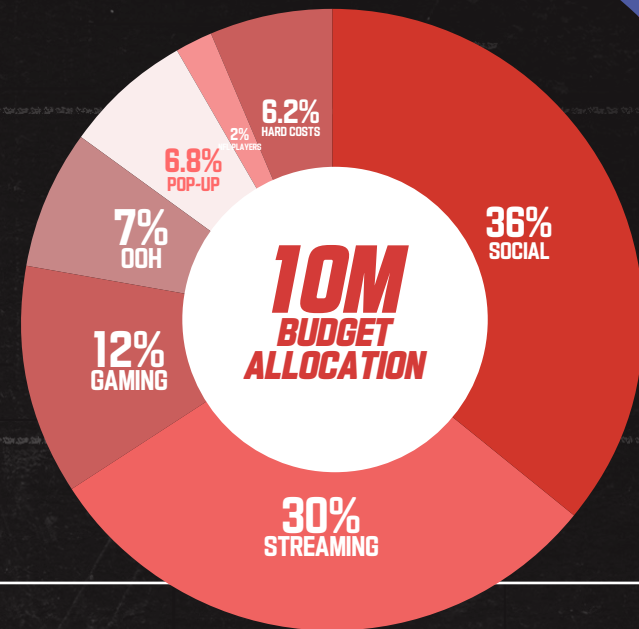
DIFFERENT STORIES, ONE TEAM.

TAGLINE

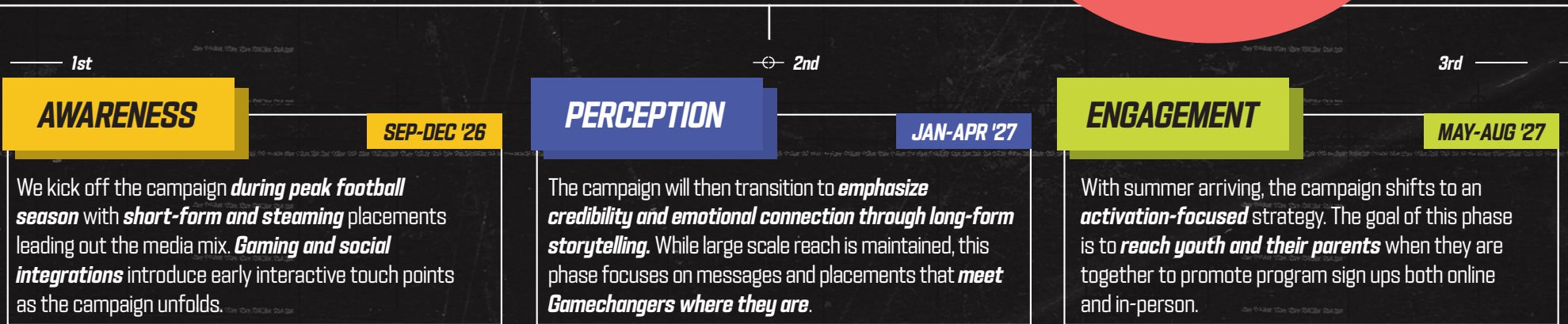
The tagline "Different Stories, One Team." reflects the idea that everyone involved with the NFL has their own background, experiences, and journey, yet they are all united under one team.

MEDIA STRATEGY

To provide the most unifying and resonant campaign, Team NFL will be launched through a **bold, digital-first, multi-channel strategy**, reaching 1,043,150,000 Gamechangers through online and in-person activations. Each media format will raise NFL perception by **switching the narrative of a high-pressure league to a unifying and inclusive team**, creating new spaces on and off the field **for youth to move beyond pressure, connect through purpose, and feel the strength of being a part of a team.**



THE TEAM NFL CAMPAIGN WILL OPERATE IN THREE CASCADING PHASES:



PLAYER SELECTION

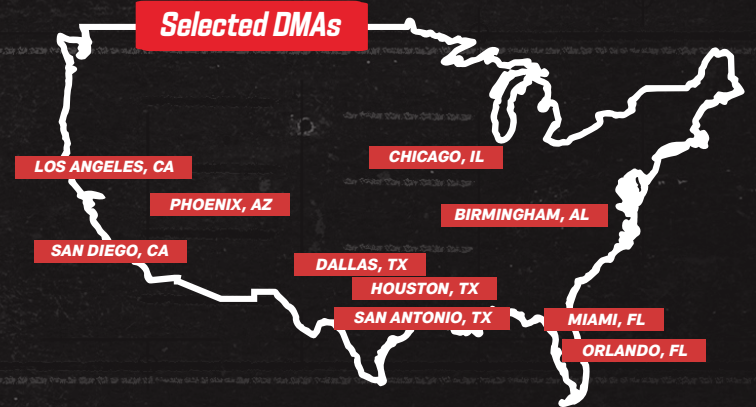
Select **NFL players will amplify** the campaign through social media influence, appearances at pop-up events, and featured ad placements, **exemplifying what Team NFL stands for:**

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Ja'Maar Chase [12] | Terrion Arnold [41] |
| DeVonta Smith [13] | CeeDee Lamb [58] |
| Cooper DeJean [45] | George Kittle [61] |
| Bijan Robinson [6] | Christian McCaffrey [11] |
| Xavier Worthy [85] | Caleb Williams [8] |

DMAS [65]

Our efforts **will concentrate across 10 DMAs**, including a mix of NFL and non-NFL markets enabling local stadium activations and expanding fandom in underserved ones chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Large Hispanic population [58]
2. High youth-under-18 index [81]
3. High female index [81]
4. High levels of NFL viewership [15, 19]



MEDIA FLOW CHART

SHORT-FORM VIDEOS Highly sharable content and trends like "Hitting the T" will encourage friends to unite.

PINTEREST Friendship focused content will reshape how young girls perceive the league.

WHATSAPP A natural space to foster connections among Latino communities.

GAMING Activations on Roblox and Fortnite will create spaces where youth collaborate as teams.

MOVIE THEATERS Pre-screening advertising will reach groups of families and friends when they are together.

TEAMSGIVING We'll appear in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, send players to Turkey Bowls, and align social media efforts with the hashtag #Teamsgiving.

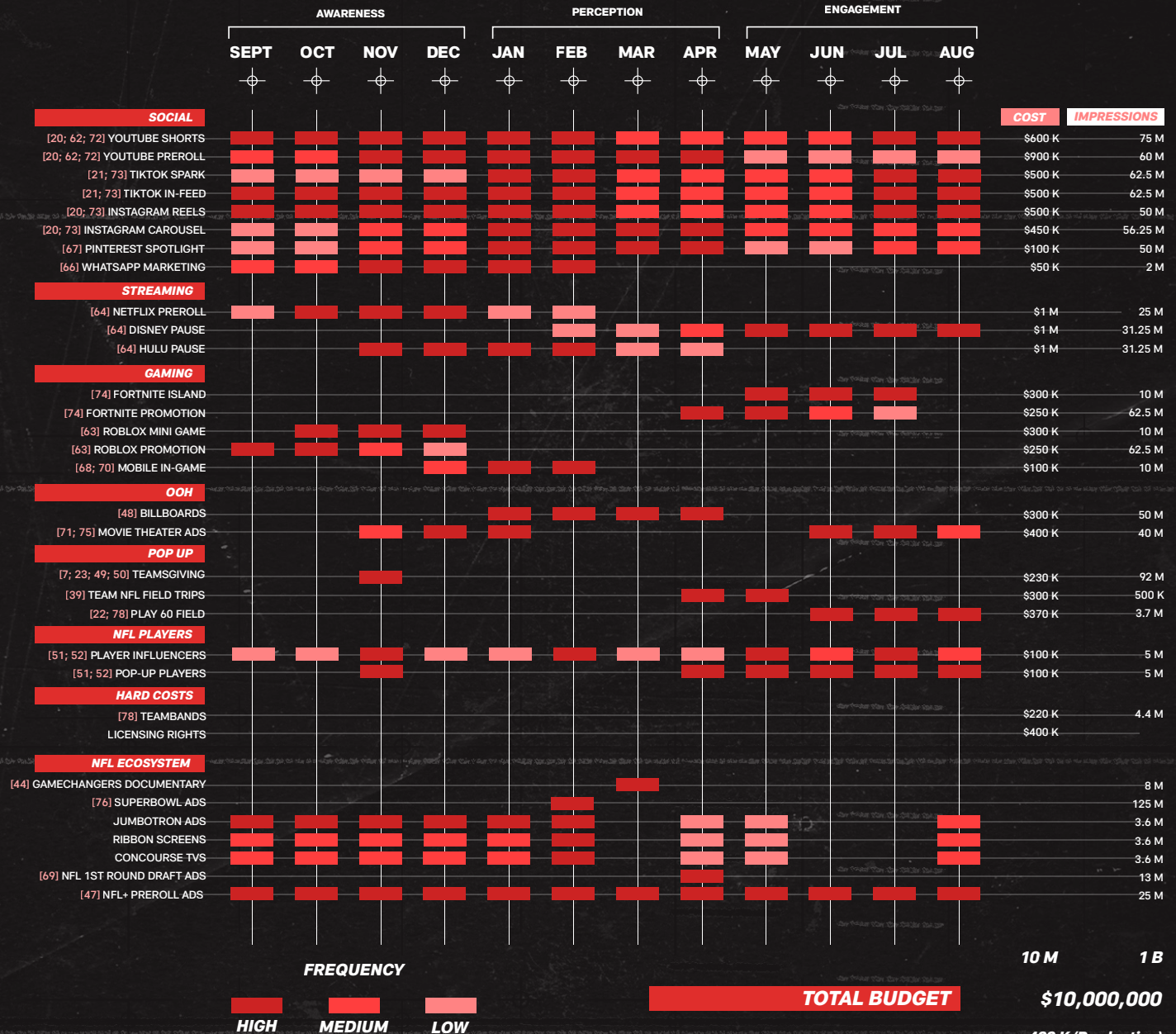
TEAM NFL FIELD TRIPS Schools near NFL stadiums will attend Field Trips where students play games and learn about Team NFL.

PLAY 60 FIELD This pop-up will bring the fun of Team NFL Field Trips to youth and parents who live in markets without a NFL stadium.

TEAMBANDS Free interactive wristbands given to youth at participating schools, programs, pop-ups, and in-stadium.

NFL ECOSYSTEM We'll extend our message with in-stadium placements and NFL+ content to keep fans connected.

GAMECHANGERS A youth-focused documentary will share inspiring stories.



FREQUENCY



TOTAL BUDGET

10 M 1 B

\$10,000,000

400 K (Production)

THE SCOREBOARD

TESTING METHOD RESULTS

To create an immersive experience inside Lumiere, participants viewed our creative executions in mockups of their intended media environments. Lumiere's AI assistant then asked participants follow-up questions to uncover deeper insights. [42]

FINDINGS

83.9% of Gamechangers agreed they enjoyed seeing our campaign.

86.7% of Gamechangers said Team NFL's message was relatable to youth.

“This is a great idea and I love it.”
-Brynn, 13

“I already knew of some NFL initiatives so my view was reaffirmed of this being a positive action.”
-Melinda, Parent

“It made it relatable and appealing to anyone who has ever felt alone and longed to be part of something.”
-Londyn, 16

OBJECTIVE 1:

CALL THE CROWD

Increase recall of the partners and programs the NFL works with and what they provide.

82.2% of Gamechangers said the campaign would make them interested in what the NFL was doing to support youth health and wellness.

58.3% of Gamechangers said they could answer a friend's question about what the NFL is doing for youth health after seeing the campaign compared to **8.7%** before.

“It made me change my thinking about the NFL, that they've been helping youth for a long time.”

Solana, 16

“Made me feel good about the NFL that they are already making a difference.”

Rebekah, 17

“It made me think that this program is important and needs recognition.”

Charity, 18

OBJECTIVE 2:

LEAD BEYOND THE FIELD

Reposition the NFL as a unifying, culturally relevant, socially responsible, and inclusive force for good.

61.9% of Gamechangers said this felt culturally relevant.

76.2% of Gamechangers said it felt like responsible topics for the NFL to promote.

“It feels good to know that there's programs to help bring others together.”

Lily, 15

“It feels more genuinely inclusive.”

Ella, 12

“Nails it! I'd watch it again and see what it was all about! I wanna be part of a team like that!”

Maren, Parent

OBJECTIVE 3:

RECRUIT OUR TEAMMATES

Increase Gamechanger's intent to utilize Team NFL resources and programs.

77.8% of Gamechangers said they would want to learn more about joining Team NFL.

74.3% of Gamechangers said it made them want to join a specific partner or program.

“I didn't know they had a youth program so seeing that ad made me want to look into the group to learn more about it.”

Sydney, 14

“I think it would make a kid more excited to participate.”

Beth, Parent

“It makes me feel like they're actually making a big difference in the world, not just the football world.”

Maria, 18

THE FUTURE OF TEAM NFL

	KPI	SOCIAL PLATFORMS	STREAMING PLATFORMS	GAMING PLATFORMS	OOH	INFLUENCERS	ACTIVATIONS POP-UP EVENTS
AWARENESS		Track views, comments, shares, search spikes, and increase in posts using program-specific tags.	Measure impressions, and analyze biometric attention data from smart TVs for true viewing where possible.	Track player participation. Measure ad viewability, skip rates, and user interaction using tools like Anzu, IAS, and DoubleVerify. [83]	Analyze foot traffic and impressions through location data. Measure attention with Camlytics IP cameras where permitted. [9]	Track views, likes, shares, and engagement on influencer posts. Conduct surveys to assess awareness of resources offered by programs and partners.	Measure event attendance plus social engagements via posts, views, likes, and shares related to the activation.
PERCEPTION		Conduct sentiment analysis of NFL-related posts and track follower growth of program and partner accounts.	Conduct short post-ad QR code surveys using likert scales to measure perception changes.	Track game-specific sentiment analysis conducted by gaming-focused brand lift vendors like Nielsen, Kantar, or Comscore. [83]	Perform geo-spatial sentiment analysis around ad locations. Analyze Camlytics data for positive emotional reactions. [9]	Track program and partner follower increase and brand perception lift created by influencer posts via tools like Aspire.io and Grin. [24]	Conduct short surveys in exchange for prizes/giveaways measuring perception change after attending the event.
ENGAGEMENT		Track increase in posts mentioning intent to engage with programs and partners, link-track sign-ups that come after viewing social ads.	Measure increases in web traffic, Google searches, and program sign-ups after ads air.	Track clicks from in-game ads and link-track sign-ups stemming from game engagement.	Use QR codes and attribution models to track scans, searches, and visits following exposure to OOH ads.	Use influencer specific codes and referral links to track registrations and conversions.	Track in-person signups and QR scans. Monitor website and program follower spikes around events.



GOING GLOBAL

Our campaign will focus its efforts in the United States, however **Team NFL is scalable to unite youth worldwide**. We translated and tested our ads in the following countries: Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Ghana, Mexico, New Zealand, South Korea, and the United Kingdom. [26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31]

70.7% of youth and parent respondents agree that this message is relevant to youth in their countries.

UNIFYING THREAD

This testing will track the accomplishment of our objectives as Team NFL creates a unified team both at home and abroad.