



The Ohio Rubber Duck Dash



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COY

JA Company of the Year Competition

Executive Summary

The Ohio Rubber Duck Dash begins with bold questions: What if a duck race becomes something much bigger? What if a small community event, the Quackstream Classic in 2024, evolves into the “go-to” spring tradition for businesses and families across Northeast Ohio?

In 2025, we rebranded and relaunched with a clear mission: to build a sustainable, student-run and self-funded business that strengthens community ties, delivers measurable value to sponsors, and empowers students to lead a company from the ground up—on a regional scale.

The Ohio Rubber Duck Dash is a student-led business powered by the Sixth District Compact EntrepreNEW Pathways program—Ohio’s first Career and Technical Education initiative focused on entrepreneurship. High school students from six districts manage every part of the event, from sales to logistics. We design, market, and operate the Dash as a true business venture. The event features a competitive duck race, a 1-mile Waddle Race, food trucks, vendor booths, and family-friendly activities. It serves not only as a celebration of youth entrepreneurship, but also as a platform for small business marketing, regional tourism, and local revenue growth.

Our event name honors the region’s history—Northeast Ohio is the Rubber Capital of the World, and our partnership with the Akron RubberDucks gives the Dash not just credibility, but a deep cultural connection to our hometown. Their support expands our media reach, puts us on the Jumbotron, and gives us direct access to thousands of families through in-stadium booths and promotions.

This report reflects a business that is currently in active operation. Financial data is current as of April 7, 2025, and will be updated and presented in full on competition day: April 22, 2025.

We collaborate with businesses across Northeast Ohio to make this event a success. The Dash provides marketing visibility, foot traffic, and community recognition for our partners, while allowing us to fund our own entrepreneurship program through our work.

We don’t just run an event. We run a business.

Financial Projections

Total Sales	\$69,889.00
Gross Profit	\$63,240.00
Operating Profit	\$39,720.00
Net Income	\$38,445.00
Break Even	\$27,397.93

The Team



Gino Petrey | President



DJ Parton | VP of Finance



Emma Sanicky | VP of Marketing



Jake Harrington | VP of Sales



Zeynep Mutlu | VP of Logistics

Ohio Rubber Duck Dash Leadership Team

Leadership and Organization

Our team includes 17 students from the Six District Compact EntrepreNEW Pathways program. We structured the team as a startup, assigning roles based on strengths and interests. Departments include Sponsorship & Sales, Marketing and Social Media, Finance and Administration, and Event Logistics. Each department lead coordinates projects, tracks progress, and reports during weekly business meetings.

The Sponsorship team manages outreach and follow-up. Marketing runs social media, advertising, and visual branding. Finance tracks revenue, expenses, and profit. Event Logistics oversees vendor coordination, setup, and duck inventory. A specialized Product Development team manages our e-commerce platform and merchandise fulfillment.

As a self-funded, student-run business, we do not receive pay—but we are deeply motivated by ownership and impact. Recognition, responsibility, and public leadership opportunities keep us focused and engaged.

We made several process changes during the season to improve performance. We migrated from Spiffy to Shopify to streamline online sales. We implemented shared task boards, communications channels, and cross-department check-ins. We formed specialty sub-teams like influencer outreach and design to meet emerging needs. These adaptations improved accountability and mirrored real-world business practice.

Innovation Process - Discovery

The Ohio Rubber Duck Dash begins with a vision: to turn a school project into a sustainable student-run company. Inspired by the Quackstream Classic and duck races in Breckenridge and Chicago, we know that duck races can attract thousands of people—but we also recognize that no place in the world is more connected to rubber than Akron, Ohio. This city's legacy as the Rubber Capital of the World gives our concept a natural home and identity.

We rebranded the event in 2025 to reflect that. The name—Ohio Rubber Duck Dash—not only positions us to scale regionally, but honors the industrial and cultural heritage of Northeast Ohio. When the Akron Rubber Ducks joined us as Title Sponsor, that connection became even stronger. Their partnership gives us access to in-game promotions, field time, and community recognition that help us drive ticket sales and build our brand.

Our venue, our mission, and our name are all tied to a place with global rubber roots and a future built by students.

We broke our year into two seasons: sponsorships (Fall) and execution (Spring). We set a goal of selling 10,800 ducks, attracting 150 Waddle Race participants, selling 100 shirts, and drawing 3,000 attendees. Along the way, we ran into issues with print vendors, digital delays, and scheduling challenges—but we solved them through cross-team collaboration.

One of our biggest operational tasks is completing a full duck inventory. We inherit thousands of ducks from last year, but many are missing—taken by attendees, damaged in the river, or unaccounted for. To avoid overspending and ensure accurate tracking, we developed an inventory system and inspect each duck by hand. We mark missing duck numbers, then calculate exactly how many replacements to purchase.

Innovation Process - Discovery

When we first created our budget in November, we worked with one of our business partners, The Workz, to source ducks at cost from a wholesaler. At that time, the expected cost per duck was \$0.19. By March, that price jumped to \$0.33—a significant increase that forced us to reallocate budget and adjust our purchasing strategy. Moving forward, we plan to depreciate our duck inventory over four years, treating them as long-term reusable assets.

These adjustments deepen our understanding of cost control, inventory planning, and how economic changes can impact purchasing decisions in real time.

We designed a five-tier sponsorship model to support businesses at all levels. Packages included branding, product integration, duck entries, and on-site exposure. Sponsors range from local shops to the Akron Rubber Ducks, who signed on as our Title Sponsor and helped amplify our media reach. Altogether, we raised over \$14,000. The Duck Dash gives sponsors more than recognition—it brings visibility, engagement, and new customers.

We manage a branded social media campaign (@ohiorubberduckdash), run paid streaming ads, and launched the Giant Duck Hunt featuring four 12-foot inflatable ducks placed in key towns. Our design assets are created with the help of Digital Sandwich, and we stay consistent across print, digital, and video. School assemblies and influencer partnerships help us connect with our audience on a personal level.

One of the most unexpected challenges is the scope of social media management at this scale. From creating content calendars to editing videos and troubleshooting platform algorithms, we realize that running a brand online requires more than creativity—it demands persistence, experimentation, and time. We learned to refine our messaging through trial and error and build strategies to grow our audience while staying true to the tone and values of our student-run company.

We are growing the Duck Dash into a full community festival with food, games, and giveaways. Duck sales are offered in bundles, and we create value by combining race registration with duck entries. Our \$35 Waddle Race includes five ducks and a medal. All revenue supports our program and business costs.

Our Giant Duck Hunt campaign will be a strong driver of social media growth and brand engagement—but it also requires daily logistics. We must check signage, ensure ducks remain inflated and secured at each location, and manage unexpected issues like deflated ducks or delayed A-frame sign deliveries. These hurdles show us the level of operational discipline required to maintain a public-facing campaign.

While the duck hunt draws in new followers, we also learn the importance of connecting campaign content clearly to the Ohio Rubber Duck Dash brand. As new users engage with our social channels, we work to ensure our messaging makes the event's purpose, goals, and student-led identity obvious and compelling.

Not everything goes according to plan. We didn't sell the Waddle Race sponsorship, and one city denied a permit for our inflatable duck. But we adjusted and moved forward. The biggest lesson is that business success depends on our ability to adapt, communicate, and deliver—regardless of obstacles.

We compete with other student fundraisers, community events, and local ad platforms for limited sponsorship dollars. For attendees, we compete with all forms of entertainment; movies, sports, and family outings. Our challenge is to offer something unique, meaningful, and local.

Customer Value Proposition

The Ohio Rubber Duck Dash is a business run entirely by students. It is self-funded through sponsorships and product sales.

For families, we offer a new tradition filled with fun and community connection.

For businesses, we offer direct access to their target customers and a chance to support youth entrepreneurship while promoting their own brand.

For us, it's hands-on experience. Every ad, invoice, and pitch comes from our team. We're learning by doing.

Unique Regional Relevance

We also operate in a place with unmatched relevance: Akron, the Rubber Capital of the World. Our theme and branding are built on that identity. The Ohio Rubber Duck Dash isn't just clever—it's rooted in a legacy of innovation. Our partnership with the Akron RubberDucks amplifies that local connection and turns a fun theme into a powerful regional brand. We aren't just building an event—we're extending a story that's been part of Northeast Ohio for generations.

Unfair Advantage

No other event in the region combines student leadership, hands-on business experience, and regional impact like the Ohio Rubber Duck Dash. It's a community tradition in the making—one designed to grow with every new class of student entrepreneurs.

Innovation Process - Product Overview



Solo Swimmer

We generate revenue through sponsorships and event product sales. We create pricing tiers that are accessible, family-friendly, and profitable.

Products are bundled to increase average order value.



Quack Pack
5 Ducks for \$20

Our five-tier Sponsor structure ranges from Feathered Friends at \$500 to our \$12,000 Title Sponsor. Each tier offers branding, duck entries, and in-person exposure. The Waddle Race package remains unsold, but the others drive both funding and engagement.



Ducky Dozen
12 ducks for \$50

Duck bundles include Solo Swimmer (\$5), Quack Pack (\$20), and Ducky Dozen (\$50). The Waddle Race offers a 1-mile run, medal, and five duck entries for \$35. Shirts are sold online and at the event for \$25. We reuse our ducks from prior years to minimize cost and waste.

Sponsors seek visibility, local credibility, cause alignment and direct engagement with present and future customers.

Families want affordable fun and a way to support students.



Waddle Race
1 Mile Fun Run \$35

We reach both groups through a combination of print, digital, school-based, and social channels. Influencer outreach and QR-code campaigns link offline materials to our online store.



Event Shirt \$25

Customer Segments

We served two main audiences:

1. **Sponsors (B2B)** – Small to mid-sized businesses in northern Summit County.
They want: Affordable marketing, local visibility, and a chance to support youth entrepreneurship.
We offer: Tiered sponsorships with real benefits, custom options (including in-kind), and consistent, professional communication from student teams.
2. **Event Participants (B2C)** – Families and community members from across Northeast Ohio.
They want: Fun, affordable activities, exciting prizes, and a way to support local students.
They purchase: Duck entries, Waddle Race registration, t-shirts, and engaged with our sponsors at the event.

Channels

We used different outreach strategies for each audience:

To Reach Sponsors:

- **Email Campaigns:** Targeted messages with a 30% open rate; follow-up was essential.
- **Phone & In-Person Pitches:** Built relationships and closed sales.
- **Sponsorship Packets:** Digital brochures with clear value.
- **Chamber Partnerships:** Expanded reach and added credibility.

To Reach Families & Attendees:

- **Social Media:** Branded pages (@ohiorubberduckdash), scheduled content, and boosted/paid posts to expand reach.
- **Streaming Ads:** Ran paid video ads for our event commercial on digital platforms.
- **Influencer Partnerships:** Local influencers helped amplify our message.
- **Giant Duck Hunt:** Inflatable duck scavenger hunt boosted engagement and visibility.
- **School Assemblies:** Visited elementary schools in all six districts to promote the event.
- **Email Blasts:** Sent through school newsletters and family communication channels.
- **Community Outreach:** Promoted directly through local events, school visits, and word-of-mouth.
- **Media Appearances:** Provided additional exposure and credibility.

Business Performance

Key Metrics

To measure our success, we tracked performance across: **Financial results vs. budget, Unit Sales Objectives, and Event Marketing and Engagement.**

Financial Performance

In addition to the financial performance against budget outlined on the following page we are measuring success based on the following metrics.

Unit Objectives

- Ducks Sold (Goal 10,800)
- Waddle Race Participants (Goal 150)
- T-Shirts Sold (Goal 100)
- Event Attendance Goal: 3,000 attendees on April 27
- Number of Sponsors (Goal 35)

Event Marketing & Engagement

- Social Media Followers Gained
- Total Reach via Paid social ads
- Tracked QR codes for print and streaming
- Email Campaign Open Rate: ~30%
- School Assemblies Delivered: 7 delivered to date
- Community Ducks (Giant Inflatable Duck Hunt placements): 4
- Geographic spread of attendees and participants

Cost Structure

Our cost structure reflects the economics of the event business, very little in terms of true Variable Costs. Event day items and supplies tend to serve the whole event and/or are bought on the basis of projected attendance.

To establish our COG we defined those as any expenses directly tied to the day of the event, all other expenses were applied as Operating Expenses.

We selected vendors by using our budgeting process to determine everything needed for the event, identifying local suppliers, using the Internet to establish additional suppliers and researching those best suited to meet our needs at the the most economical cost.

Revenue Streams

Revenue flowed from two sets of customers:

Sponsorships

- Paid Sponsorships
- In Kind Sponsorships

Event Day Products/Activities

- Duck Adoptions
- Race Registrations
- T-Shirt Sales
- Miscellaneous Onsite sales

Business Performance

Financial Performance

Ohio Rubber Duck Dash Budget/Income Statement 4/8/2025			
Budget		Income Statement	
Income	Budget Projection	Total	%Budget
Sponsorships	\$15,500.00	\$14,000.00	90.32%
Duck Sales	\$43,200.00	\$8,540.86	19.77%
T-Shirt Sales	\$2,500.00	\$100.00	4.00%
Race Registrations	\$5,250.00	\$245.00	4.67%
Sales Tax Collections	\$3,439.13	\$356.33	10.36%
Total Income	\$69,889.13	\$23,242.19	33.26%
COG Expenses			
Credit Card Fees	\$2,038.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Event Day Expenses	\$4,611.00	\$2,475.12	53.68%
Total COG Expenses	\$6,649.00	\$2,475.12	37.23%
Gross Profit	\$63,240.13	\$20,767.07	32.84%
Operating Expenses			
Sales Tax	\$3,439.13	\$0.00	0.00%
Assembly and Sales Events	\$1,741.00	\$232.03	13.33%
Marketing	\$16,790.00	\$6,098.67	36.32%
Giveaway Ducks	\$350.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Misc. Expenses	\$1,200.00	\$157.66	13.14%
Total Operating Expenses	\$23,520.13	\$6,488.36	27.59%
Operating Profit/Cash Flow	\$39,720.00	\$14,278.71	35.95%
Other Expenses			
Depreciation	\$1,275.00	\$853.80	66.96%
Total Other Expenses	\$1,275.00	\$853.80	0.00%
Net Income	\$38,445.00	\$13,424.91	34.92%
Break Even Point	\$27,397.93		

Financial Statement Note - This business is in progress the Income Statement reflects results to the date shown.

Learning Experiences and Future Application

Reflections

Running the Ohio Rubber Duck Dash is one of the most challenging and rewarding parts of our high school experience. What began as a fun idea has become a crash course in entrepreneurship, logistics, sales, marketing, PR, customer service, and teamwork. It pushes us, teaches us, and prepares us for whatever comes next.

What We Are Learning

Entrepreneurship = Problem Solving: From website delays to permit issues and rainy-day worries, things rarely go as planned. We learned to adapt, stay calm, and keep moving forward.

Communication is Key: Whether pitching sponsors, leading assemblies, or coordinating with vendors, clear communication and follow-up made all the difference.

Sales Require Strategy: Getting businesses to invest meant showing value, telling a compelling story, and building trust through consistent outreach.

Leadership is Shared: Success came from teamwork, not titles. We learned to lead by supporting each other, taking initiative, and being accountable.

Real Work Takes Real Time: Every task—from designing shirts to managing social media—took more time than expected. We improved our planning, time management, and respect for the process.

What It Means for Our Future

This experience wasn't just a school project—it was a business. We gained real-world skills in:

Team leadership & collaboration, financial management & strategy, public speaking & outreach, product development & customer service, marketing & media planning

We now know what it means to build something from the ground up—and that we're capable of leading something real.

Future Vision for the Ohio Rubber Duck Dash

What we are building in 2025 is just the beginning. Our goal is to turn the Ohio Rubber Duck Dash into a signature annual event for Northeast Ohio—one that each new class can grow, enhance, and lead.

For 2026, we're aiming even higher: bringing the World's Largest Rubber Duck to Northeast Ohio and creating a full festival weekend. This would transform the Dash into a regional destination—boosting tourism, supporting local businesses, and expanding student leadership opportunities.

It will take more planning, more sponsors, and more student leadership—but we've proven it's possible. With continued support, the Dash can become a tradition the community looks forward to, and a launchpad for future entrepreneurs.

We may be students—but we're not done yet.

Web - www.ohiorubberduckdash.com

Social - [@ohiorubberduckdash](https://www.instagram.com/ohiorubberduckdash)

Event - Sunday, April 27 2025

Waterworks Park 2025 Munroe Falls Avenue
Cuyahoga Falls Ohio
11:30 - 3:00



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