



**U11 HOCKEY ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT PILOT
2023-24**



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Background

The hockey landscape has evolved significantly over the past five years with customers seeking different options within minor hockey. Hockey Alberta continues to analyze all levels of hockey that we offer to ensure they meet the needs of our customers. This includes updating and improving the philosophies on which our current structure is built, being cognizant of what participants are seeking and providing the best programs to meet the developmental needs of all players.

In 2021-22, a U11 AA Pilot Project was established in the Northern Alberta Interlock league. This pilot offered unique scheduling opportunities, based on league geography, as well as a formal tryout process similar to that used in the AA Hockey Model. Unlike the regular tiering process, members of the U11 AA pilot were determined prior to the season, allowing players to be certain of the level of competition at which they would participate, and ensuring that players could access the level of hockey suitable for their abilities, regardless of their location.

In 2022-23, the U11 AA Pilot Project was expanded to provincewide to become the U11 Hockey Alberta Development Pilot (U11 HADP). The HADP continued exploring the merit of a predetermined top level of U11 hockey in Alberta. The HADP operated as the top level of U11 hockey, followed by Tiers 1-5.

Results and feedback from 2022-23 have been positive and interest in a predetermined top level of U11 hockey continues to increase. With only one season of the pilot operated province wide, Hockey Alberta is extending the U11 HADP as a pilot program for the 2023-24 season. The extended pilot will operate predominantly the same as in 2022-23 with a few minor tweaks based on the results and feedback received. This pilot will again operate as the top level of U11 hockey, followed by Tiers 1-5.

Scope of the Project

Hockey Alberta will conduct a Pilot Project that implements an amended hosting structure, player movement rules and coach and player development standards. Working in collaboration with the Minor Leagues, a series of actionable recommendations will be identified in time for implementation of a new U11 model in the 2024-25 season.

The outcome of this pilot is to identify the best overall structure for the top level of U11 and to ensure alignment and progression from the levels beneath it to the levels above it. Principles of Long Term Athlete Development must be adhered to within all recommendations.

Objectives

1. Develop a structure for where teams are located (ie Host MHAs) within the pilot and identify the locations.
2. Develop player movement rules for the pilot.
3. Identify standards under which host MHAs operate.
4. Develop and implement coach and player development initiatives to improve the player experience.
5. Analyze and review all aspects of the pilot, including consulting with member MHAs to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
6. Identify, complete with supporting rationale, the ideal number of teams at the top level of U11.
7. Determine how the new top level of U11 best fits within the AA Model or the Tiered Minor Hockey (Alberta One) system in the future.
8. Align the proposed new model with the Alberta One Tiered Minor Hockey system as well as the AA Hockey Model to ensure a proper development pyramid and 'feeder system'.

Measurables

- Goal differential within the pilot to determine competitive balance.
- The number of players trying out for each program and where those players come from.
- Player satisfaction with their experience playing for a U11 HADP Hosting MHA within this provincial pilot.



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Key Areas of Concern

- Competitive balance amongst all teams within a division.
- Why players choose to leave sanctioned hockey for non-sanctioned alternatives.
- Establishing a proper development pyramid and feeder system throughout all Minor Hockey.
- Not negatively impacting one level of hockey by adjusting another.
- Not negatively impacting one area of the province by adjusting another.
- Cost to the customer to play at the higher levels.
- Distance of travel (by age division) to play at the higher levels.

Principles of the Pilot Project

1. This pilot will follow the [U11 Player Pathway Phases](#) as outlined by Hockey Canada.
2. The best philosophy for developing players is to create an environment where similarly skilled players can compete together and against each other. This pilot provides a structure where players are provided the opportunity to access the appropriate level of hockey.
3. A standardized system of hockey that creates a competitive balance at U11. It provides players with a developmental system that focuses on skill development and acts as a feeder system for U13 hockey.
4. A Regionalized Hockey System that provides opportunities for players to access the top level of hockey within a reasonable distance of travel from their residence. Designed to balance the needs of the player with that of the MHA and family.
5. Uses established criteria to determine the conditions under which the teams operate. Teams provide opportunities for all the players within their identified region.

League Structure

The Central Alberta Hockey League (CAHL), Hockey Calgary and Edmonton Federation Hockey League (EFHL) will host the U11 HADP for their member associations, while the All Peace Hockey League (APHL), NAI and North Eastern Alberta Hockey League (NEAHL) will work collaboratively together to host the U11 HADP for their member associations.

Host Minor Hockey Associations & Number of Teams

To make it fair for all Minor Hockey Associations in the Province, the Alberta One Standardized Tiering Grid has been used to establish the number of teams permitted to operate U11 HADP programs. U11 HADP-hosting MHAs must be determined prior to **May 31** of the upcoming hockey season.

The number of teams an association can host at U11 HADP in a season will be determined by the number of U11 teams an association hosted in the previous hockey season.

Number of U11 Teams (2022-23)	Required Number of U11 HADP Teams	Potential Number of U11 HADP Teams (Upon Application)
1-3 Teams	0	1
4-10 Teams	1	1
11+ Teams	2	0

- a. Associations with 1-3 U11 teams in the previous season must apply if interested in hosting one U11 HADP team.
- b. Associations with 4-10 U11 teams in the previous season will host one U11 HADP team.
- c. Associations with 11+ U11 teams in the previous season will host two U11 HADP teams.
- d. Associations that wish to host fewer teams than the above criteria dictates must apply for contraction.
- e. The committee responsible for overseeing the Pilot reserves the right to deviate from this criterion should circumstances dictate.



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Teams should submit applications to increase/decrease their number of U11 HADP teams with the following supporting rationale:

- Registration Numbers
- Competitive Balance
- Support from League & Surrounding Associations

April 30 is the deadline for additional U11 HADP applications for the upcoming season.

Player Movement

Once teams have been determined, U11 HADP Host MHAs may begin the tryout registration process. Player Movement regulations have been developed to address the parameters of the pilot and are as follows:

Players who do not have access to U11 HADP hockey within their resident MHA will be permitted to pursue U11 HADP tryouts with an HADP-hosting MHA that is accepting HADP tryout players:

- a. Should a player be released from an HADP tryout, they must return to their resident MHA. No second tryouts will be permitted.
- b. Players within an MHA hosting U11 HADP hockey must pursue U11 HADP with their resident MHA.
- c. Players are responsible for arranging their own U11 HADP tryouts and cannot be prohibited from pursuing a U11 HADP tryout by their resident MHA.
- d. Players must provide a signed [Notification of Tryout Form](#) if a non-resident of a U11 HADP host MHA.
- e. U11 HADP Host MHAs can refuse to accept players from outside their Minor Hockey Association.
- f. U11 HADP Host MHAs are encouraged to provide all players trying out for their team(s) four prep skates as required by the [Hockey Canada U11 Pathway](#) prior to evaluations and team selection.

Player Acceleration

The objective of the pilot is to develop players within their specific age group, and not to displace the players from their age division by facilitating the movement of underage players. It is not recommended that U11 HADP Host MHAs consider underaged players.

Team Registration

All teams will be registered in the Registry by the MHA that has been identified as the Host MHA. The Host MHA will register the team(s) in accordance with the Hockey Alberta Minor Hockey Regulations.

All teams must be properly and duly registered in the Registry prior to their first league game or November 15, whichever occurs first. All Players and Team Officials participating with a Hockey Team must be duly registered in the Registry before participating in their first league game.

To align the system of player development within Alberta, teams are not permitted to begin the player evaluation and selection process for the current season prior to the first week of school, or during the first week if it starts the week after Labour Day. Each team is provided the opportunity to utilize exhibition and pre-season games for the purpose of team roster declaration. Provided that these exhibition and pre-season games take place prior to the first scheduled league game and prior to November 15, teams will not be required to have all players identified on the roster in the Registry when playing these games.

Each team must register a minimum of 16 players and will be permitted to register a maximum of 19 players (two of which must be goaltenders) at any one time during the season.



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Coach and Player Selection

Head Coach Requirements:

- NCCP Coach 2
- NCCP Coach Instructional Stream – Checking Skills

Coach and Player selection is the responsibility of the Host MHA.

One principle of the pilot is for each Host MHA to consider all eligible coaches and players when selecting their team(s). Regardless of where a coach or player resides, they should all be treated equally during the evaluation and selection process.

There are no “quotas” permitted to be exercised for the purposes of this pilot and there shall be no restrictions, based on place of residence, placed on the coaches or players. It is the expectation that Host MHAs build teams with the best possible players and coaches available to them.

Affiliation Policy

To allow for affiliation, U11 HADP teams will be eligible to affiliate players that reside within the boundaries of the Host MHA and any players from outside the Host MHA boundaries, who had an official tryout with the U11 HADP team(s). Players eligible for affiliation from outside the Host MHA boundaries must reside within the boundaries of an MHA that is not hosting a U11 HADP team and must have a signed U11 HADP Notification of Tryout Form as proof of their tryout with the U11 HADP team(s).

All players to be registered for affiliation must meet and qualify in accordance with the Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada Regulations. U11 HADP players may affiliate up to U13 AA, U13 Tier 1 and U13 Tier 2 teams within either the U11 HADP hosting MHA or their resident MHA, if different. Affiliation needs to be filed in the Registry and approval will come from the Minor Administration Coordinator for the Region in which the Host MHA is located.

Providing affiliation has been properly filed, an affiliated player may play with the team to which the player is affiliated up to a maximum of 10 games, excluding exhibition and tournament games. Should an affiliated player play more than 10 games with the team to which the player is affiliated, they shall be considered an “Ineligible Player”. However, if the player’s registered team completes its regular season and playoffs before the player’s affiliated team, the player may thereafter affiliate an unlimited number of times.