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Enhancing the player experience key for Hockey Alberta's HA2025 plan

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Hockey Alberta's focus is on the players.

Last year, the organization unveiled its comprehensive HA2025 plan, which focuses on enhancing the player experience through inclusion, diversity, retention and growth. Hockey Alberta CEO Rob Litwinski says the results are starting to show.

"Several years ago, we developed a mission which we are still very proud of — to create positive opportunities and experiences for all players," Litwinski says.

"Over the past two years, during the pandemic, we re-evolved our values and our behaviours. And, with HA2025, we've created five objectives and key results that we believe are the most important priorities over the next few years."

Within the HA2025 plan, the five objectives focus on providing choice and flexibility; creating new standards, assessment and development programs; increased education and training for coaches; creative options to attract new participants of all ages to the game; and increasing revenue.

Drew Dixon, Hockey Alberta's senior manager of member development, says HA2025 allows minor hockey programs across the province to plan for the present and the future.

Consistent service and leadership at the local level helps ensure a positive experience for all players.

"Our main focus is making sure our members and minor hockey associations have a certain amount of expectation that they can provide to their membership," Dixon says.

"And in doing so, we ensure we have the appropriate resources and support to guide them in their planning and execution."

Hockey Alberta is piloting a U11 AA program this



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Creating "positive opportunities and experiences for all players" is one of several objectives identified in Hockey Alberta's HA2025 plan.

season and is looking at options at the U13 level, which may include the addition of a U13 AAA program. Also implemented this season is a new Recreational Hockey Model.

Hockey Alberta is also committed to the continued development of coaches at all levels because of the significant impact coaches have on their players throughout the season. Providing structure and education is the key, says Justin Fesyk, Hockey Alberta's senior manager of hockey development.

"We have about 16,000 coaches in Alberta and about 66,000 players, so if we want to make players better, the 16,000 is the easier number to work with," Fesyk says.

"We have a coaching pathway. Coaches need the

minimum requirements to coach a team, but we want to create a culture around continued education. We want them to look at the opportunities we provide and enhance their coaching abilities throughout the year," Fesyk adds.

One of the major shifts in the current plan involves focusing on specific content and ensuring coaches are giving appropriate instruction for various age groups and skill levels.

"Sometimes coaches will see something in the NHL and try to replicate that with their youth team, and they won't have a lot of success," Fesyk says.

"Challenge the kids but set them up to succeed as well."

For more information, visit hockeyalberta.ca.

