

SOFTBALL ALBERTA

**Long-Term Player Development
Implementation Plan**

2018 - 2021

								
	Active Start	FUNDamentals	Learning to Train	Training to Train	Training to Compete	Learning & Training to Win	Living to Win	Active for Life
Males	0-6	6-9	9-12	12-16	16-23	19+	23+	All ages
Females	0-6	6-8	8-11	11-15	15-21	19+	19+	All ages

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INTRODUCTION



As one of the more popular summer sports in Canada, Softball is played in virtually every province and territory, engaging boys and girls and spectators alike with its exciting rhythm and unpredictable action. One can participate in Softball at any age. Kids start at a young age and continue well into adulthood; this great game is played by many all over the country. Softball includes both slo-pitch (SP) and fastpitch (FP) streams.

This document outlines the initial actions Softball Alberta will undertake to implement the Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) model as developed by Softball Canada with the guidance of Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L).

This overview of the Softball Alberta Implementation Plan will address specific objectives and outline a series of action plans.

SOFTBALL-SPECIFIC LTPD MODEL

“The Canadian Sport for Life: Long-Term Athlete Development” Resource Paper, which describes the generic LTAD model, is based on a comprehensive review of coaching literature, sport science research, and best practices from effective sports programs within Canada and around the world. Exercise and sport science research and experience provided insight and information regarding the role of growth, development, and maturation in athletic development.

In 2008, Softball Canada published the Long-Term Player Development Guide for Softball in Canada.

Since that time Softball Canada has also produced other LTPD resources that are available for download from their web site (www.softball.ca) under the Long-Term Player Development tab. The national adoption and promotion of the LTPD and Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) have created a clear mandate for LTAD Principles. Using the Long-Term Player Development Guide for Softball in Canada overview document as the guiding framework and with support from Alberta Sport Connection, Softball Alberta has undertaken discussions on the state of the game in Alberta, the desired state, and what needs to be done to achieve that desired state. Through these discussions, this LTPD Implementation Plan was created.



PROGRAMS & COMPETITIONS

BY DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

Softball in Alberta is organized so any individual, regardless of age or competitive level, can find an appropriate environment to meet their specific needs and goals. It should be noted that the stages overlap as player's progress at different rates. Whether the emphasis is on fun, social or high level competition, softball in Alberta can provide services to anyone. The following age categories are offered in Alberta:

● TIMBITS

● U12

● U16

● U23 Men

● Senior

● U10

● U14

● U19

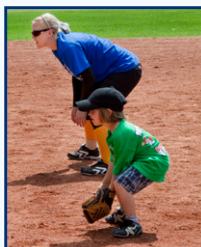
● Intermediate

● Masters - 35+

ACTIVE TO START:

0 to 6 years

This stage is all about making physical activity a fun part of everyday life.



Programs:

TIMBITS Program (M/F)

FUNDAMENTALS:

Female: 6 to 8

Male: 6 to 9

This stage focuses on learning fundamental movement skills and building overall motor skills.



Programs:

TIMBITS Program (M/F)

CANpitch Program (M/F)

Softball Skills Clinics (M/F)

LEARNING TO TRAIN:

Female: 8 to 11

Male: 9 to 12

Focus is on developing softball--specific skills ensuring an appropriate level of fun while adding the competitive aspect of the game.



Programs:

NCCP Clinics

TIMBITS Program (M/F)

CANpitch Program (M/F)

Softball Skills Clinics (M/F)

Competitions:

FP Provincial U10 Jamboree Co-ed

FP Provincial Championships U10

Female & Male - Open

FP Provincial Championships U12

Female - A, B, C, D Male - A, B

TRAINING TO TRAIN:

Female: 11 to 15

Male:- 12 to 16

Focus on developing softball-specific skills while starting to compete more seriously. The major focus during competition is on applying what they've learned in training- not on winning at all costs.



Programs:

Skills Clinics (M/F - to 15)

Competitions:

FP Provincial Championships U14

Female - A, B, C, D Male - A, B

FP Provincial Championships U16

Female - A, B, C, D Male - A, B

FP Western Canadians (M/F) U14, U16

FP Canadian Championships (M/F) U14, U16

TRAINING TO COMPETE:

Female: 15 to 21+/-
Male: 16 to 23+/-

Focus is working on event or position specific skills and physical demands. Everything in this stage is about optimizing physical preparation.



Programs:

*Team Alberta Training & ID
Camps (M/F – 15+)*

Competitions:

FP Provincial Championships 19
Female - A, B, C, D Male – A, B
FP Western Canadians (M/F) U19B
FP Canadian Championships (M/F) U19A
FP Canadian Championships (M) U23
FP Provincial Championships U23
Male - A, B
FP Canada Summer Games (M/F)

LEARNING & TRAINING TO WIN:

Female: 18+
Male: 19+

Emphasizes a shift towards true high performance, including an increased focus on individualized training and performance results at competitions.



Programs:

*Team Alberta Training & ID
Camps (M/F)*

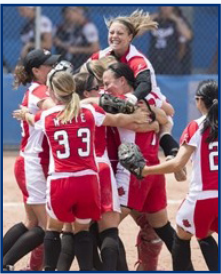
Competitions:

FP Provincial Championships
Intermediate (M/F) – A,B,C Senior & Masters (M/F)–A, B
SP Provincial Championships
Intermediate (M/F) – Open Senior (M/F)–A
FP Western Canadians – Senior B & Masters (M/F)
FP Canadian Championships – (M/F) Senior A
SP Canadian Championships – (M/F) Senior A

LIVING TO WIN:

Female: 19+
Male: 23+

Emphasizes performance results and international excellence.



Programs:

NCCP Clinics

Competitions:

FP Junior World Championships (M/F) U19 (ISF)
FP International Invitational Tournaments (M/F)
FP World University Games (F) (FISU)
FP World University Softball Championship (F) (ISF)
SP Border Battle (M/F)
FP Pan American Championship (M/F)
FP Pan American Games (M/F)
FP Senior World Championships (M/F) (ISF)
Olympics (F)

ACTIVE FOR LIFE:

All ages

This stage is all about a smooth transition from a competitive career to lifelong physical activity and participation in sports.



Programs:

*NCCP Clinics
Community Fun Teams (M/F)
Scorekeeping Clinics - Basic, Advanced, Refresher*

Competitions:

FP Seniors & Masters Prov.I Championships
SP Seniors & Intermediate Prov.Championships



IMPLEMENTATION

Through the planning process, Softball Alberta identified seven initiatives essential to implementing LTPD. Five of these initiatives were identified in the Softball Canada LTPD Guide:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Player Development | 4. Competition |
| 2. Coaching | 5. Facilities & Equipment |
| 3. Leadership | |

The Softball AB LTPD Committee felt that the following two initiatives were also important elements of the implementation plan:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 6. Officials | 7. Communication |
|---------------------|-------------------------|



These seven initiatives cover all areas of the LTPD model set out by Softball Canada.

🟡 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT 🟡

Softball Alberta's ongoing commitment is to the "Player First" mentality. It is important to provide an environment that allows players to reach their next level both on and off the field.

Objective: To provide optimal training environments for players to develop in stage appropriate fun formats, and achieve their full potential.

Goal: Expand the use of Softball Alberta Development teams across the Province

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Engage competent, skilled and engaging softball players to run camps across the Province	Softball AB & Ongoing	Implemented
2.	Ensure development teams have appropriate training for athletes they are working with.	Softball AB & Team Leaders	Implemented & Ongoing
3.	Raise the profile of these development teams by highlighting the accomplishments of their members.	Softball AB & Local Associations	Implemented & Ongoing

Goal: Increase the number of CANpitch instructors across the Province

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Offer more CANpitch opportunities, especially in rural communities (NCCP Pitcher Instructor Beginner clinics)	Softball AB & Regional Pitching Instructors	Implemented & Ongoing
2.	Promote current CANpitch offerings to members.	Softball AB & Regional Pitching Instructors	Implemented & Ongoing
3.	Maintain a Master Pitching Instructor in Alberta.	Softball A	Implemented & Ongoing



Goal: Increase LTPD awareness and education within Softball Alberta membership

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Hold LTPD sessions/meetings in communities across the Province	Softball AB & LTPD Committee	Initiate in 2018
2.	Incorporate LTPD education into Learn to Coach program	Future Consideration	
3.	Identify and partner with community leaders to bring LTPD education directly to parents, coaches and athletes.	Future Consideration	

Goal: Provide developmentally appropriate programs for each stage

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Expansion of U10 pilot program across the Province in line with Softball Canada recommendations.	Future Consideration	

Goal: Increase the exposure of Softball to young athletes

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Expand and promote the Learn to Play Program opportunities across the Province.	Softball AB	Initiated Fall 2015 & Ongoing
2.	Utilize Learn to Play program to increase registration.	Softball AB	2018
3.	Train more Learn to Play instructors to allow the program to be offered in more communities.	Softball AB	Initiated February 2016 & Ongoing
4.	Partner with Sportball to include Softball as one of their sports	Future Consideration	

Goal: Ensure the fundamental softball skills are being taught at the appropriate stages

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Promote and make available the Softball Canada Coaches Guides (U12-U16) and Learn to Play Guide and encourage their use for stage appropriate training.	Softball AB	Implemented & Ongoing
2.	Encourage use of Triple Play to track athlete development	Softball AB & Local Associations	Initiate 2018
3.	Distribute Softball Canada technical skills matrix to all members (noted to be developed in 2015-2018 Softball Canada Strategic Plan)	Future Consideration	

Goal: Provide a clear pathway for progression of an athlete through the sport of Softball

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Create a development pathway document for opportunities in Softball in Alberta.	Softball AB & LTPD Committee	2019
2.	Promote transition of athletes from Minor to Active for Life Programs	Softball AB & Local Associations	Ongoing
3.	Promote transition of high performance athletes from Minor to Adult programs (U19, U23 & Senior Westerns & Nationals, Junior & Senior Team Canada).	Softball AB & Local Associations	Implemented & Ongoing
4.	Provide development camp offerings that include: a. A focus on increasing participation. b. Providing an opportunity for possible Summer Games athletes in off-season years.	Future Consideration	



COACHING

Softball Alberta supports and fosters the development and education of coaches from the grassroots to elite levels. Our goal is to provide coaches with tools necessary to be effective, create positive change and continuously increase their knowledge.

Objective: To recruit and retain coaches who participate in continuing education and provide optima training environments for players that focuses on fun, fair play and long term player development.



Goal: Increase the quality of coaching in Alberta

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Increase number of coaches participating in the NCCP program	Softball AB & Local Associations	Implemented & Ongoing
2.	Promote and make available summary of Softball Canada LTPD stages to all coaches in Alberta .	Softball AB Program Coordinator	Initiated May 2016 & ongoing
3.	Encourage coaches to utilize Triple Play to enhance their knowledge and better track their players development	Softball AB & Local Associations	Initiate 2018

Goal: Foster a culture of empowerment in coaching through support and development

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Support the transition from "athlete" to "coach" with programming and communication	Local Associations & Softball AB	Ongoing
2.	Communicate offerings and encourage new coaches to take additional training <i>E.g. Fundamental movement skills, Run Jump Throw, High Five Training and various other courses available online (coach.ca)</i>	Softball AB & Local Associations	Initiated April 2016 & Ongoing
3.	Pilot Softball Canada's Learn to Coach program when available	Future Consideration	

Goal: Increase the number of Female coaches at all NCCP levels

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Provide a mentorship program to transition female athletes to coaches	Softball AB & LTPD Committee	Investigate opportunities in Fall 2018
2.	Identify obstacles to females participating as coaches	Softball AB & LTPD Committee	Initiate in Fall 2018
3.	Develop a pool of coaches within each zone who can be identified for opportunities such as Alberta Summer games.	Softball AB & Local Associations	Initiate during 2017 season

Goal: Track coaching statistics

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Determine how many certified Softball coaches in Alberta are still participating	Softball AB	Initiate 2018
2.	Analyze demographic information of coaches to identify trends and gaps	Future Consideration	



LEADERSHIP

A leader plays a critical role in the implementation of change. They provide vision and direction as the softball community moves towards implementing LTPD principles.

Objective: To establish clear leadership with knowledgeable individuals who provide effective messages, programs and educational materials in support of Long Term Player Development.



Goal: Identify appropriate funding models for LTPD programs

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Investigate sponsorship or funding options for the Learn to Play program.	Future Consideration	
2.	Identify grant or other funding opportunities available on a local, provincial or national scale	Softball AB	Initiated Fall 2015 Enhance in 2018

Goal: Create a development pathway document to be clear about where kids can go

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Identify differences in competition and practices for the different pathways (Club vs. Community) - pull information from LTPD document	LTPD Committee	Investigate in 2018
2.	Identify the key factors at each stage that place athletes in a particular pathway.	LTPD Committee	Investigate in 2018
3.	Educate members on the LTPD stages and related information in regards to training and development; Emphasize importance of PRACTICE over GAME.	Softball AB & LTPD Committee	2018 Spring & Ongoing
4.	Simplify LTPD information to be more applicable to coaches and practice plans.	LTPD Committee	2018
5.	Facilitate conversations between local associations to encourage working together for the betterment of the sport and player.	Softball AB & Ongoing	Initiated 2018

Goal: Develop a Registration database

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Move from excel spreadsheets to database that can provide key information (rosters, coach certifications, long-term player registration, etc.)	Softball AB	Improve in 2018



🏆 COMPETITION 🏆

Softball Alberta recognizes that current competition structures need to evolve. Identified below are our objectives and priorities, taking into account a formal provincial Competition Review will be required.

Objective: To develop and maintain competitive structures that focus on stage appropriate competition and encourage rewarding, respectful and fun environments.



Goal: Ensure current and future competition structures relate to LTPD guidelines

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Conduct a review of the current competition structures and identify gaps.	Softball Canada & Softball AB	Softball Canada initiated September 2015 - Ongoing
2.	Develop appropriate guidelines and rule modifications for each stage.	Softball Canada & Softball AB	Initiated March 2016
3.	Educate members about what is appropriate competition at each stage.	Softball AB	2018
4.	Set policy for sanctioning of tournaments based on achieving those guidelines.	Future Consideration	

Goal: Apply LTPD principles to current competition structures

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Identify why athletes compete at each stage of development	Softball AB & LTPD Committee	Initiated 2016 & Ongoing
2.	Implement regional jamboree formats in U10 with future consideration of Jamborees taking the place of Provincial Championships (softball Canada LTPD pg.36)	Softball AB	Pilot for 2016 & Ongoing

FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT

Softball facilities can assist the development of an athlete by providing safe and challenging environments for unstructured as well as organized play. Appropriate equipment and facilities will provide an athlete with the opportunity to achieve their best at a particular stage.

Objective: To provide guidelines around the safe and appropriate use of facilities and equipment for each stage of development.



Goal: Educate members on diamond time required in each stage of development

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Extract information regarding stages and practice to competition ratios from Softball Canada LTPD document PG.35.	LTPD Committee	2018
2.	Create a document that shows how much diamond time is required for teams in particular stages.	LTPD Committee	2019

Goal: Develop strategy to recommend equipment modifications to fit athlete's needs at various stages

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Educate members on what stage-appropriate equipment is	Future Consideration	
2.	Make recommendations/guidelines for equipment that enhances fundamental skill development (e.g. indoor balls for U10)	Future Consideration	

Goal: Advocate for a larger share of indoor facilities for pre-season and early season programs (primarily in larger centres)

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Investigate opportunity for Club Excellence certification	Future Consideration	
2.	Investigate alternative strategies to increase the share of indoor facilities.	Future Consideration	

🟡 OFFICIALS 🟡

Officials in the game of softball encompasses all those involved from administration, supervision, scorekeeping and on-field officiating. Retaining the on-field officials (umpires) is a vital component in maintaining an effective sport system.

Objective: To recruit, train and retain knowledgeable umpires who serve as mentors to the softball community.



Goal: Recruitment

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Establish umpiring as a work experience that count for credits	Alberta Softball Umpires Association	Piloted in Edmonton 2015 & 2016 Pilot in Red Deer 2016
2.	Continue to provide scholarships for umpires	Alberta Softball Umpire Assoc. & Softball AB	Ongoing
3.	Increase visibility of umpires within Softball Alberta content	Softball AB	Implemented 2015 and ongoing

Goal: Retention

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Analyze umpire registrations over last 5 years to determine turnover rates.	Alberta Softball	2016
2.	Survey former umpires to determine why they are leaving/left the sport.	Alberta Softball Umpires Assoc.	2016

Goal: Create a culture of Respect

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Implement Respect in Sport program across Province	Future Consideration	
2.	Communicate reasons umpires leave to parents / athletes / coaches	Alberta Softball Umpires Assoc. & Softball AB	Implemented on a AB regional basis
3.	Promote True Sport principles and Fair Play guidelines	Softball AB	2019

🟡 COMMUNICATION 🟡

Effective communication is one of the most important components contributing to the performance and growth of a sport organization. Engaging members is essential to building and maintaining successful softball programs in Alberta.

Objective: To provide information and timely communication utilizing the latest technology and resources.



Goal: *Expansion of Long Term Player Development Specific communication*

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Provide consistent, targeted content regarding LTPD in Softball Alberta communications	Softball AB & LTPD Committee	2018

Goal: *Create a Communication Plan*

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Create a template that outlines when events, programs or news occur annually.	Softball AB	2018
2.	Identify appropriate timing for communications	Softball AB	2018

Goal: *Expand Softball Alberta's communication reach*

Strategy	Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Track analytics on website and newsletter - traffic, clicks, opens, etc.	Softball AB	Completed Dec. 2014 & Ongoing
2.	Sign up for a newsletter provider that tracks analytics.	Softball AB	Completed Jan 2015

CONCLUSION

This Softball Alberta LTPD Implementation Plan was created based on the CS4L framework and Softball Canada's "Long-Term Player Development Guide for Softball in Canada".

Implementing LTPD will require changes to various levels of softball in Alberta; it will require a concentrated effort to educate parents, coaches, players and administrators about LTPD principles. We all will need to adjust attitudes and philosophies, and demonstrate more accountability in our roles. Support for LTPD implementation will need to come from diverse stakeholders who may have to set aside personal interests for the greater success of softball.

Success can be achieved by communicating this plan to all the softball communities.

Through the implementation of LTPD, Softball will become a stronger sport at all ages and levels of LTPD. Implementation will result in better player development which in turn will better competitive results. More importantly it will result in players participating in softball for life.



REFERENCES

1. *Softball in Ontario LTPD Implementation Plan (2011 – 2015)*
2. *Softball Canada (2008); Long Term Player Development Guide for Softball in Canada; First Edition*
3. *Canadian Sport for Life Resources center (www.canadiansportforlife.ca); LTAD Resource Papers;*