



BC SOCCER

***BC Soccer Premier League (BCSPL)
Parent Handbook
2023***

January 2023

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1. Introduction

a. Document Purpose

This document is designed to provide all players, parents and the wider BC Soccer membership, with information on the BC Soccer Premier League (BCSPL). It outlines the purpose of the league, including why the league was initially established, the target participants, the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in delivering the league, as well as frequently asked questions regarding the league.

b. Guiding Principles

BC Soccer, through the BCSPL, commits to four key principles related to player identification and development within the Province of British Columbia:

- 1. To promote a Person/Player First Approach.**
- 2. To support the Canada Soccer's Long-Term Player Development Principles.**
- 3. To provide Clear and Recognized Pathways for players to be identified, developed, and supported within.**
- 4. To support and enhance Technical Standards within the BCSPL.**

c. BC Soccer Premier League Overview and Purpose

The BCSPL is a standards-based development environment for girls and boys aged U13 to U18 and is positioned as the highest level of youth development community soccer within BC. Its purpose is to bring together identified players from the BC Soccer membership in training and game environments that support overall development, as well as providing further opportunities for player identification into higher levels of play including, Provincial Programming, University, League 1 BC, Professional, and National teams programming and progressing into adult community soccer.

The BCSPL is also designed to support the development of coaches and referees, who are required to attain a minimum level of certification to ensure high standards are in place. This is complimented with ongoing technical support through the BCSPL Participating Clubs, BC Soccer, and Canada Soccer.

It is important to note that participating Clubs in the BCSPL have received Canada Soccer's National Youth Club Licence (NYCL) which covers administration, governance, infrastructure, and technical criteria. Receiving this designation from Canada Soccer in addition to gaining BC Soccer Board of Directors' approval allows for BCSPL participation. Further, participating Clubs must also comply with the BCSPL league rules and regulations. By receiving Canada Soccer's NYCL and complying with the BCSPL rules and regulations, this provides assurance that the participating Clubs are adhering to quality standards and are operating at the highest level of youth community soccer within BC and Canada.

d. Background

Looking back as we look forward.

2011

The BCSPL was established following a directive from Canada Soccer to the Provincial Member Associations to develop and introduce high performance youth leagues. Canada Soccer's intention with the directive was to create standards-based youth leagues to support the provincial development pathways at the U13 to U18 ages. In British Columbia, a Request for Proposal process was established and, in partnership with the Vancouver Whitecaps FC, eight founding BCSPL franchise clubs were selected.

2011 to 2014

A league Board of Governors composed of the participating club representatives was established to oversee BCSPL operations. From 2011 to 2014, BC Soccer supported league operations primarily through a review of technical delivery and providing technical recommendations based on good practices specific to player and coach development.

2016 to 2019

In accordance with BC Soccer's 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, BC Soccer established the BCSPL Club Licence (introduced in 2017), initially designed to set out the minimum technical standards to which franchise clubs were required to adhere. The BCSPL Club Licence also identified areas for clubs to improve and was a mechanism for BC Soccer to remove a franchise club that did not meet the requirements, thus creating the ability for another organization outside the BCSPL, but within BC Soccer's membership, to apply to join and participate in the BCSPL.

During this time, BC Soccer also took a more active role in supporting the BCSPL, specifically working with the BCSPL President and leadership group to better align the governance model and, with the direction provided by Canada Soccer, the operation of the BCSPL transitioned from an independently operated society to a BC Soccer program.

2019

In 2018, Canada Soccer introduced its Club Licensing Program. The highest level within that program is the National Youth Club Licence designation (NYCL). One of the requirements of the NYCL is that holders participate in the highest level of youth play in each province; in BC, that is the BCSPL. Based on the introduction of national club licensing program, BC Soccer dissolved its BCSPL Club Licence, moving key technical requirements in the BCSPL league rules and regulations as well as retooling the resources and support into a BCSPL by way of the Technical Service Plan being introduced in 2019.

2020 to 2023

In September 2020, the BCSPL expanded from 8 founding franchise member clubs to 11 BCSPL Clubs, further expanding to 12 in 2021 and from September 2022 through to 2023 there will be 13 BCSPL Clubs.

2024 +

The league will expand to 15 clubs in 2024 and through the 2022 BC SPL consultation process, BC Soccer condensed the playing age groups from U13 to U18 to U14 to U17 for implementation in September 2024 and beyond. For more information see FAQs.

2. BC Soccer Premier League (BCSPL)

a. Organizational Roles and Responsibilities

There are a number of key stakeholders that contribute to the oversight, support, and delivery of the BCSPL. These stakeholders primarily include, Canada Soccer, Professional Soccer Programming, BC Soccer, and importantly the BCSPL participating clubs. Provided below is a high-level summary of each’s role and responsibilities as it relates to the BCSPL.

Canada Soccer

To oversee and facilitate the application, review, and approval process and on-going quality assurance of the Canada Soccer National Youth Club Licence designation while supporting BC Soccer with the oversight and direction of the BCSPL.

BC Soccer

To manage the operation of the BCSPL under the guidelines provided by Canada Soccer, along with reviewing BCSPL Clubs against the implementation of the BCSPL rules and regulations.

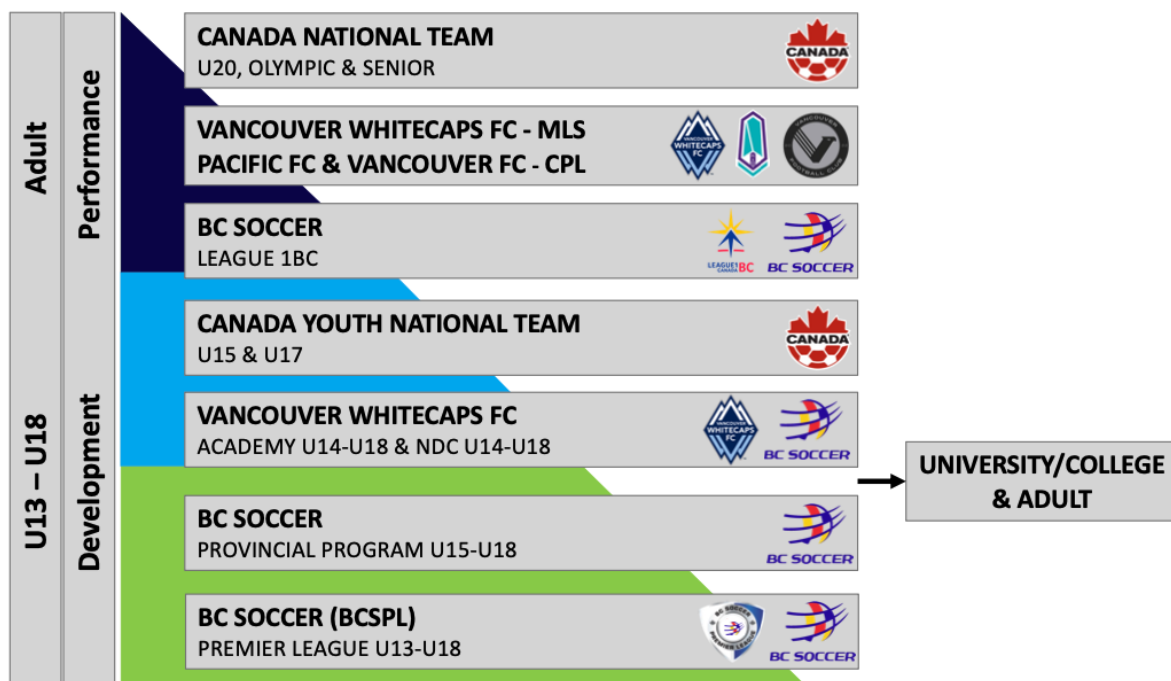
BCSPL Participating Clubs

To create the best possible environment to deliver the programming that best meets the needs of the participants, while continuing to adhere to the ongoing Canada Soccer National Youth Club Licence requirements and BCSPL rules and regulations.

Professional and National Soccer Programming

To work in collaboration with BC Soccer, specifically the BC Soccer Provincial Program and the BCSPL participating clubs to support player identification into appropriate Youth Professional and National soccer programming.

BC Soccer Playing Environments



A number of player development environments support the player pathway, including district associations and affiliate soccer clubs in BC.

b. BC SPL Participating Clubs

Importantly, participating Clubs in the BC SPL are required to have met the Canada Soccer National Youth Club Licence requirements, covering administration, governance, infrastructure, and technical. This requirement is in addition to gaining BC Soccer Board of Directors' approval for participation. Furthermore, participating Clubs in the BC SPL must also abide by BC SPL league rules and regulations.

Each year BC Soccer Member Organizations from outside the BC SPL can apply for Canada Soccer's National Youth Club Licence. As the licensing process involves several steps and is an in-depth review of organizational governance and operations, the approval of new licence holders requires time. As such, new applicants approved for participation in the BC SPL will not begin play until the year following their approval. For example, if an Organization within the BC Soccer membership structure applies for the National Youth Club Licence in 2023, and meets all Canada Soccer and BC Soccer requirements identified above, the earliest approval of that organization as a National Youth Club Licence holder would occur in 2024 and that Organization will be eligible to participate in the BC SPL beginning in September 2025 beginning at U14 and adding girls and boys teams at U14 each subsequent year until full participation is achieved.

As of September 2023, the BC SPL will consist of thirteen BC SPL Clubs, including two on Vancouver Island, one in the Okanagan and eleven in the Lower Mainland. For more information on the participating Clubs in the BC SPL, please see below.

BC SPL Clubs	Location	Website
Coastal FC	Surrey	https://www.coastalfc.ca
Coquitlam Metro Ford SC	Coquitlam	https://www.cmfc.ca
Fusion FC	Richmond	https://www.fusionfc.ca
Langley United Soccer Association	Langley	https://www.lusa.ca
Nanaimo FC	Nanaimo	Nanaimo United FC Soccer For Life-- Home
North Vancouver FC	North Vancouver	https://nvfc.ca
Mountain United FC	Burnaby	https://mufc.ca
Ridge Meadows SC*	Maple Ridge	https://ridgemeadowssoccer.ca
Surrey FC	Surrey	https://www.surreyfc.com
Surrey United SC	Surrey	https://www.surreyunitedsoccer.com
Thompson Okanagan FC	Kelowna	http://tofc.ca/wp/
TSS Rovers	Richmond	https://www.tss.ca
Port Moody SC*	Port Moody	https://portmoodysoccer.com
Van Isle Wave powered by Pacific FC	Victoria	https://islandtrainingcentre.ca/vancouver-island-wave-program/
Vancouver United FC	Vancouver	https://vancouverunitedfc.com

****Starting September 2024***

c. Competition Outlet (League Play) Format*

The BC SPL competition outlet/league play format typically consists of two phases: Phase One (February to June) and Phase Two (August to November).

- Pre-season typically commences in February and August
- For the months of July, December, and some of January this is typically off-season.

In total a player within the BC SPL is typically provided 9 months of soccer activity over a period of 12 months.

The Competition format includes league play and the Provincial Cup. For an overview of the BC SPL schedule and competition format please see below.

Phase One

Month	Activity	Description
January	Off-Season	Players take this time to rest from soccer activity and can focus on other physical development activities/sports.
February	Pre-Season	Players are physically and mentally prepared for the requirements of the game related to their position and team actions when defending and attacking.
March, April, May	League Competition	BC SPL Teams compete in a round-robin competition whereby all teams have a final placing and seedings for the Provincial Cup are determined.
June	Provincial Cup Competition	BC SPL Teams are placed in a knockout competition, including quarterfinals through to a final and the winners are declared Provincial champions.

Phase Two

Month	Activity	Description
July	Off-Season	Players take this time to rest from soccer activity and can focus on other physical development activities/sports.
August	Pre-Season	Players are physically and mentally prepared for the requirements of the game related to their position and team actions when defending and attacking.
September, October, November	League Competition	BC SPL Teams compete in a round-robin competition whereby the U13 to U18 teams have a final placing, and the winners are declared League champions.
December	Off-Season	Players take this time to rest from soccer activity and can focus on other physical development activities/sports.

**With the expansion of organizations within the league as well as to meet good practice competition formats that are player first, as of September 2021, a review of the BC SPL competition format is being undertaken for planned implementation in 2024.*

3. Frequently Asked Questions

Why should my child join the BCSPL?

If your child is keen to compete in the highest level of youth development community soccer and/or aspires to represent their country, play at a university, semi-professional, or professional level, then the BCSPL is an environment that aims to support their development and offer opportunities for identification into these higher levels of play.

What are the minimum standards of technical programming that the players receive?

BCSPL participating clubs must meet the CSA National Youth Club License standards. See Link: [Canada Soccer National Youth Club Licence](#) As well as the BCSPL Rules and Regulations. See Link: [BCSPL Rules and Regulations 2023](#)

What level of play is the BCSPL designated at?

The BCSPL is recognized as the highest level of youth development community soccer and is the final step into higher-level playing environments such as the Provincial Program as well as semi-professional, professional and national youth programming.

How much does one season of play typically cost?

Importantly, the fees collected (similar to all other community-based programming) are set at the local level with the participating club. Typically, the average cost for a full season within the BCSPL is \$2,500 (based on information shared by the clubs in 2019). This may or may not include extended travel and competition outside of the BCSPL. It is important to note that there are no parameters in place from a BC Soccer level on what clubs can charge for programming.

Are there any financial grants or other assistance available to players?

BCSPL participating clubs do provide financial aid for players to participate within the BCSPL; however, this is on a case-by-case basis and subject to that individual BCSPL Club's discretion.

How do I get selected for the Provincial Program?

Players are identified and selected to the program through the BC Soccer identification network which includes the following options:

- 1. BCSPL Club Team Head Coach recommends players to the Club's Technical Director, who in turn recommends the players to BC Soccer.*
- 2. The player is identified in a BCSPL match by a BC Soccer's soccer development staff member.*
- 3. The player is identified in a BCSPL match by a professional youth programming staff member.*
- 4. The player is identified by a Canada Soccer's youth national programming staff member.*
- 5. The player is identified on their prior performance within the BC Soccer Provincial Program.*

How does BC Soccer ensure that the BCSPL participating clubs are compliant with the rules and regulations?

All BCSPL participating clubs must adhere to the rules and regulations, as set out in the BCSPL Rules & Regulations 2023. Failure to comply can result in fines, administered by the BCSPL General Manager. More serious offences can result in suspension or expulsion from the league, administered by BC Soccer Association Board of Directors.

Importantly, the BCSPL, participating clubs and all those involved at all levels, must also comply with the Judicial Code and Policies of BC Soccer.

How many players are registered in BC for the U13 to U18 age groups?

As an example, there were approximately 1692 registered players across 94 teams and 10 clubs in the BCSPL for Phase 1 in 2021.

Is there a limit to the number of BCSPL participating clubs?

Currently there is not a limit to the number of clubs that can participate within the BCSPL as set out by Canada Soccer; however, all clubs must apply for and receive the National Youth Club Licence as well as approval from the BC Soccer Board of Directors in order to participate in the BCSPL.

How do BC Soccer ensure the BCSPL is a safe environment for players?

All BCSPL personal, including, coaches, managers and referees are required to complete a Criminal Record Check and Respect in Sport Activity Leader training, as well as coaches and referees being certified/trained at the appropriate level of delivery.

In addition, all BCSPL participating clubs have a Code of Conduct to Protect Children, a Rule of Two Policy aligned to the Coaching Association of Canada's Responsible Coaching Movement, Guidelines for Appropriate/Inappropriate Conduct between Adults/Adolescents and Children, including what to do if you witness inappropriate conduct, and a Policy requiring that any suspicion of child abuse is reported to law enforcement aligned to the "Duty to Report". These policies, guidelines, and processes are supported by a Primary Liaison for Child Protection who has completed Commit to Kids online training through the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

BC Soccer Safe Sport Statement:

BC Soccer believes that everyone involved in soccer has the right to participate in safe and inclusive environments free of abuse, harassment, discrimination, and to enjoy the sport at whatever level or capacity they participate in.

The welfare of everyone involved in soccer is the foremost consideration and in particular, the protection of children in the sport is the responsibility of everyone involved.

Does BC Soccer encourage diversity and inclusion within BCSPL programming?

Yes, all BCSPL girls' teams must have at a minimum one staff member either, Head Coach, Assistant Coach or Team Manager that identifies as a woman as per BC Soccer Rules and Regulations.

In addition, as a requirement of the National Youth Club Licence, BCSPL Clubs must have a coaching strategy that encourages women in coaching, provide programming that targets underrepresented groups as outlined in the Canada Soccer Guide to Accessibility and Inclusion and programs, partnerships, and/or other mechanisms to reduce barriers to participation.

What will the new intake age group of the BCSPL in 2024 and beyond be?

In September 2023, across the province, all U13 age groups will commence 9v9 small side game formats which is aligned with the direction from Canada Soccer. This change impacts the BCSPL as this standards-based level of play is based on 11v11 game formats. Therefore, in September 2023 the U13 Intake age group (2011 Birth Year) will not be*

participating in the BCSPL. This age group's selection process will be delayed by one year until September 2024 at the U14 Intake age group within the 11v11 game format. The 2011 born players will continue to participate in their regular soccer environment with their club teams utilizing the 9v9 small-sided game format.

**Some leagues in BC already use 9v9 or smaller sided game formats for the U13 age group.*

Why is BC Soccer making this change?

There are many benefits for children to remain playing small-sided soccer for a longer period, including more 1v1 and 2v2 attacking and defending experiences, more opportunity for touches on the ball as well as more focus on technical player development rather than the team tactical side of the game in an 11v11 game format which should occur as players age.

Further and very importantly, this change delays early player selection and supports more players in a wider pool to continue to play together and develop in small-sided games formats and in local league soccer. This change delays selection for a further year, allowing the player to continue to develop at their own rate and ability to be more appropriately placed in the right playing environment for the Under 14 age group and above. This shift also provides for one more year of growth, socially and emotionally, thus hopefully better supporting the player as they are introduced to the selection process into the BCSPL (a wider provincial league).

Ultimately, this change puts the player and their development at the decision-making forefront and is in alignment with Canada Soccer recommendations of the Under 13 age group playing 9v9.

What will be the new exit age group of the BCSPL in 2024 and beyond be?

Commencing Spring 2024, the U18 age group will be phased out of the BCSPL. The last year of participation will be Phase 1 of 2024 (2006 Birth Year).

In 2024 the new exit age group of the BCSPL will be the U17 age group (2007 Birth Year). This means the U17 age group will only play in Phase 1 in 2024 completing their participation with Provincial Championships in June 2024.

Why is BC Soccer making this change?

There are many reasons why this change is being implemented, including:

- *Aligning to Canada Soccer*
- *Providing opportunity for progressive players (University identified/committed) to experience adult soccer environments at the U18+ age group to further support their development.*
- *Providing opportunity for more community/recreational players to play within the U18 youth community/recreational playing environments.*
- *Supporting the transition of youth to adult soccer in the various playing environments provided.*
- *Allowing BCSPL clubs to focus on a core age range of players from U14 to U17 age groups.*
- *Considering the financial cost to the parent and aims to remove this.*

4. Appendix

a. BC Soccer Document Links

Rules and Regulations

BC Soccer oversees the operation of the BCSPL in accordance with BC Soccer Rule 21. The BCSPL Rules and Regulations are reviewed annually by the BC Soccer, Soccer Development Department and approved by the BC Soccer Board of Directors. BCSPL Clubs shall have the opportunity to provide feedback on the BCSPL Rules and Regulations to the BC Soccer, Soccer Development Department on an annual basis through an end of season BCSPL feedback survey and club meetings conducted by the BCSPL General Manager. BCSPL Rules and Regulations are subject to change at the determination of the BC Soccer, Soccer Development Department in consultation with the Canada Soccer, Development Department with BC Soccer Board of Director approval.

For more information, please click on the link provided. [BCSPL Rules and Regulations 2023](#)

Administration Handbook

This document acts as a supportive guide for BCSPL clubs when managing the administrative requirements of league participation. This includes but is not limited to the submission process of rosters and player registration through to information as it relates to travel requirements and player transfer forms.

For more information, please click on the link provided. <https://www.bcspl.ca/information>

Technical Service Plan

The Technical Service provided to the BCSPL Clubs is designed to support the delivery of player and coach development programming. With a focus to maintain and raise the overall standard of the BCSPL training and game environments. BC Soccer provides technical resources and support to the BCSPL Clubs through documentation, workshops, club visits, as well as online software support. This service is part of a wider service plan that will be introduced to the BC Soccer membership in 2023.

For more information, please see the BC Soccer website at <https://bcsoccer.net/home>

Physical Testing Guidelines

This document has been designed to guide and support BCSPL Franchise Clubs in implementing physical testing protocols with BCSPL Club programming from U13 - U18 boys and girls age groups. The document provides the step-step process in how to measure the physical characteristics of the players focusing on their speed, strength, and endurance. These guidelines are shared directly with the BCSPL Club.

Provincial Program

The Provincial Program is designed to bring together identified players from the BC Soccer Premier League (BCSPL) into training and game environments. The program's focus is player centered, not team centered, and aims to support each player's development while also creating an overall environment that allows scouting opportunities by Universities, Colleges, semi-professional, professional programming, and ultimately Canada Soccer's youth national teams programming.

The Provincial Program selects players in the U15 – U18 age groups. There are two phases annually within each calendar year: January to July, and August to December. Each phase consists of training sessions, match play, and camp activity. At the end of each Phase (December and July), players who have participated in training sessions receive a BC Soccer Player Progress Report. The Player Progress Report has been designed to support the players in identifying areas of strength and areas to develop within their Club activity. The report is also shared with their respective BC SPL Club Technical Director.

In 2022 the program expanded to identify players for the U19 to U22 age group in alignment with the newly introduced League 1 BC.

For more information, please see the BC Soccer website at <https://bcsoccer.net/provincial-program>

b. Canada Soccer Document Links

Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program / National Youth Club Licence

The Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program is designed to guide member organizations (clubs and academies) throughout the country toward best principles for organizational development both on and off the field. Member organizations play an essential role in the development of players, coaches, and officials and provide both the daily playing environment and primary contact for participants. By raising the standards of member organizations, both the daily playing environment and participant experience are enhanced; thereby improving the overall soccer system in Canada.

To guide development from the boardroom, through the office, to the field, the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program outlines standards across four pillars: Governance, Administration, Infrastructure, and Technical. Model organizations are equally committed to quality in all areas of their governance and operations. Without strong governance structures and administrative systems, it is difficult to sustain high calibre technical programming.

In order to classify member organizations, a series of categories have been established within the Club Licensing Program. The Canada Soccer National Youth Club Licence recognizes the highest achieving organizations from across Canada. Organizations achieving this licence display characteristics and demonstrate behaviours aligned with the highest expectations of governance, administration, infrastructure, and technical, support their Member Association (BC Soccer) and Canada Soccer Pathways and participate in the highest levels of competition in Canada (the BC SPL in British Columbia).

For more information on the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, please click [here](#).