



Hockey Manitoba's Under-7 Face-off Festival Host Manual 2026-2027

Another Under-7 season is upon us, and with that comes the excitement of the Hockey Manitoba Under-7 Face-off Festivals! Hockey Manitoba's Under-7 Face-off Festivals are one of the largest and most impactful grassroots initiatives across Canada. The scope of the project sees a collaborative hosting effort by Hockey Manitoba, its regional bodies, and Minor Hockey Associations. Last year, 8 sites across the province hosted over 1,500 Under-7 aged players!

The objectives of this initiative are to create a fun and exciting event for Under-7 players, while promoting cross-ice hockey and skill development. This is often the first large-scale hockey event for our players, and is designed in a safe, fun, and inclusive manner that fosters a sense of community for everyone involved. In conjunction with the on-ice development of the players, there is also an educational component wherein new hockey parents will learn about the U7 program, its development evolution, what it means to be involved in the sport through a pre-recorded presentation created by Hockey Manitoba. In our shared effort to grow the game, it is important that we not only engage our young athletes, but also the people in their lives who make their hockey dreams a reality.

This event is free for attendees, and Hockey Manitoba will reimburse hosts for the ice costs.

DATES

Hockey Manitoba believes it is best to host Face-off Festivals between mid-October to mid-December to ensure the event is a key component of the start of the hockey season. However, earlier/later dates are also acceptable.

We are encouraging each Region to hold one larger event in collaboration with Minor Hockey Associations, providing an opportunity for the kids and parents to connect across their regions and associations. Aim to create a fun event atmosphere by including games, off-ice training, special guests, fundraisers, prizes, and other fun events or attractions.

WINNIPEG

In the Winnipeg region, we recommend that the ten (10) Area Associations work together to run a total of three (3) U7 Faceoff Festivals. Ideally, two to four (2-4) Associations will combine to run their respective event and collectively decide on the date and location that works best for them.

RURAL REGIONS

Each rural region will designate and work with a host location/Association to run their U7 Face-off Festival and determine the location that works best for them. Regions will only be guaranteed one (1) event. Should Regions wish to host a 2nd U7 Faceoff Festival event, they are welcome to submit an application which will be subject to approval by Hockey Manitoba.

ON-ICE STRUCTURE

Players are asked to arrive at the rink with their equipment on (excluding skates, helmet, gloves).

We realize that the structure of this event may not mirror each Association's specific U7 format, however it is important to establish consistency in delivery, therefore all U7 Face-off events should follow the identified structure within this document.

The event is structured with three (3) teams on the ice per hour (this can be two (2) if necessary). The ice surface will be broken down into three cross-ice sections, separated by dividers. It is recommended that for the first 30 minutes, teams remain together in their assigned section, and work through a variety of drills/stations designed for fun and fundamental skill development. Two (2) mini nets are required per section, for a total of six (6) mini nets to run the event.

The next half hour is designated for a game. Each team will break into two groups designated as "A" and "B". with the "A" group consisting of the teams' most developed players and the "B" group consisting of players that require more support. This will result in each cross-ice section having two groups of equal ability participating in cross-ice games.

Games are to be played 3 v. 3, with players not actively playing staying in a designated rest area. Two teams within each group will play and one team will rest in the neutral zone area during each shift. Shifts will be two minutes running time in length, and a buzzer will sound to designate a shift change. This will result in each team playing two two-minute shifts consecutively, followed by a two-minute break. Equal playing time for everyone! There can be music (background) during the game portion of each ice time to help create a fun atmosphere.

IMPORTANT NOTE: A detailed on-ice plan will be circulated that must be distributed to all U7 coaches in advance of the event, complete with illustrations, drill descriptions, key teaching points and applicable logistics associated with their role during the event

RECORDED GRASSROOTS PRESENTATION

A recorded presentation will be circulated by Hockey Manitoba to the hosts for distribution to parents and families. It is highly encouraged that people take the time to watch the presentation, which will highlight the Long-Term Development principles, important information regarding grassroots hockey, the importance of teaching skating and incorporating skill development and age-appropriate training, as well as information on coach expectations at the U7 level.

It will be the responsibility of the region to distribute the recording and promote their Face-Off Festival. Each minor hockey association should also be encouraged to watch the presentation and promote festivals within their region.

SUPPORT FROM HOST ASSOCIATION(S)/REGION - CHECKLIST

The following is a list of items/responsibilities that we are asking of you to make this event successful (**based on event date at end of October or November to mid-December**):

August: Confirm date of event to Hockey Manitoba and secure facilities (ice, conf. room)

September: Assign volunteer(s) lead to oversee event and recruit additional volunteer support

September – October: Inform all U7 coaches of initial event details (location, etc.)

September – October: Begin preparation and discussion of execution and logistics of event, giveaways, etc.

October: Confirm number of teams and total number of players to Hockey Manitoba

October: Circulate information provided by Hockey Manitoba to coaches and parents

October: Determine and circulate schedule, dressing rooms, other details to coaches and parents

At the event: Ensure equipment is on-site (dividers, mini nets, 50-60 blue pucks, etc.)

Event: Schedule on-site volunteers to welcome, assist with logistics, direct parents etc.

Event: Confirm responsible timekeeper for the day.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This initiative is all about inclusivity and should not be an "opt-in" option for teams – please ensure ALL U7 teams that are able within your Association or Region participate in this exciting initiative!

HOCKEY MANITOBA SUPPORT

- General support in all planning and preparations
- Creation of communication and emails to forward to coaches and players
- Supply Coach Guidelines and On-Ice Plan Overview
- Cost coverage of ice facilities and rental (as required) following the completion of the [2026 U7 Face-Off Festival Post-Event Report](#)
- Player Giveaways

HELP US MAKE THIS EVENT EXTRA SPECIAL!

To create a true Festival atmosphere and set this event apart from a regular practice or game day, Hockey Manitoba asks that each host Association develops its own extra fun (and SAFE!) activities or giveaways (should be provided for FREE). This will also assist you in connecting with your new hockey families and players in a positive way at the start of the season. Please remember hockey needs to be FUN, particularly for young children that may be trying the game for the first time.

As Hockey Manitoba continues to prioritize grassroots programming with events such as the U7 Faceoff Festivals, Associations are encouraged to celebrate their local content whenever possible. This may include activities that focus on local community engagement, serving snack options from local/regional providers (sharing food is not permitted), or invite leaders from the community to join the festivities!

SOCIAL MEDIA & PHOTO REQUIREMENTS:

Hockey Manitoba is asking all festival hosts to collect photos of their event and share the photos with Shaye Samec, Coordinator, Programs & Events at ssamec@hockeymanitoba.ca, so that your event can be highlighted on social media! Photos can also be uploaded directly in the [2026 U7 Face-Off Festival Post-Event Report](#).

Please feel free to promote your event and post photos on regional/association social media platforms! If/when posting about your event on social media, please tag Hockey Manitoba on the applicable social media platforms:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Twitter (X)

Hockey Manitoba sincerely thanks our Associations and Regions for your support! Let's work together to create a positive, fun and exciting event for the kids and an educational/development opportunity for parents and coaches. For additional questions, please contact Shaye Samec at ssamec@hockeymanitoba.ca.

