



# MANITOBA SOCCER ASSOCIATION

**GRASSROOTS  
PROGRAMMING 2026**





# POSITIVE CHANGES AHEAD GRASSROOTS SOCCER PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

We're excited to share a series of important updates to Manitoba's grassroots soccer programming.

These enhancements are aligned with Canada Soccer's Grassroots Standards, which require implementation by 2026. They are designed to create more consistent, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate soccer experiences for all players aged 8 to 13. Canada Soccer has recently confirmed the inclusion of 13-years-olds in the framework.

We will be incorporating these changes strategically into our planning.





# GRASSROOTS PROGRAM OVERVIEW & PHILOSOPHY

## **Grassroots Standards – A Nationally Aligned Framework**

Canada Soccer's Grassroots Standards are nationally-aligned requirements that outline how soccer for players aged 8–13 should be delivered across the country. These standards promote open access, age-appropriate training, coach education, and a focus on enjoyment and development over competition.

## **What is Grassroots Programming?**

Grassroots programming is soccer designed for children aged 8–13 that emphasizes fun, inclusion, and skill development in a safe and supportive setting. It uses a festival-based game model, open registration, rotating training groups, and station-based training.

## **Key Program Adjustments**

Moving forward, all soccer for players aged 8 to 13 will be delivered through the standardized Grassroots Program model – there will no longer be “developmental” vs “recreational” streams within this age group.





# PROGRAM STRUCTURE & TERMINOLOGY

## 1. STREAMS: A Unified Delivery Model for All Players Aged 8–13

- Tryouts are removed. Clubs may invite up to 50% of players; the remainder must be open registration.
- No permanent rosters; players will be grouped fluidly each week based on engagement and growth.
- League games are replaced by festival-style events focused on fun and development.
- All youth clubs must deliver U8–U13 programming using this model.
- Festival games will be facilitated by Game Leaders instead of referees. Game Leaders (scheduled by the host club) manage kickoff, game flow, and end time with support from actively involved coaches.

### Why This Matters

- Equal access and opportunity for all players.
- A positive, inclusive environment with development at the player's pace.
- Coaches can focus on rotating and developing players without pressure from scores or rankings.
- Game Leaders reinforce a supportive, learning-focused game environment – minimizing pressure and maximizing player development.

## 2. LANGUAGE: Aligning with National Terminology and Philosophy

- 'Recreational' and 'Developmental' categories for ages 4–13 are now 'Grassroots Programming'.
- 'Tryouts' are replaced with open registration and coach recommendations.
- 'Grassroots' (ages 8–13) is training-focused and inclusive.
- Players 14+ transition into 'Community' or 'Competitive' streams.

### Why This Matters

- Unified language creates understanding across all stakeholders.
- Removes early labels and encourages long-term participation.





# CALENDAR & CLUB EXPECTATIONS

## 3. CALENDAR: A Realistic and Supportive Yearly Structure

- Phase-in rollout: Start with U8-U9-U10, then U11, and eventually U12-U13
- Sessions delivered in seasonal blocks (spring, summer, fall)
- April and October serve as key intake/training windows

### Winter Consideration (Nov-Mar)

- Indoor space is limited: flexibility is key.
- Clubs may offer:
  - Futsal-style play.
  - Station-based indoor training.
  - Outdoor festivals if weather and fields permit.

### Why This Matters

- A balanced schedule reduces burnout.
- Encourages long-term player development with appropriate rest.

### What This Means for Clubs and Providers

- Youth clubs must:
  - Use station-based training.
  - Follow coach certification standards.
  - Provide weekly sessions and festivals.
- Manitoba Soccer will provide guidance, training, and audits.