

IModel PILOT

Q. What issue does the IModel address?

A. The intention is to integrate stakeholders (clubs and academies) and existing competitive structures, with the goal to unify the soccer community and continue moving the game forward by introducing some novel but rational solutions and concepts that addresses several difficult questions, length of the season, self-determination, adequate level of competition, promotion & relegation, seasonal periodization, and affordability.

Q. What are the specific player development benefits for this change?

A. The IModel drivers are a combination of league criteria and player readiness, with the vision to equally serve all members, allowing even the smallest organization the possibility of being placed at the adequate competitive level based on merit. (real-time assessment).

Q. Given the concerns with COVID and parents hesitant to commit to a 2022 outdoor season, can the deadline for registration be delayed for this year?

A. We are closely monitoring the COVID situation however, at this point in time, we are planning to move ahead as planned for 2022.

Q. Is York Region the only District this pilot will apply to?

A. The 2022 pilot will use the Central Region to test the model where we will gather data enabling us to exercise the concept without disrupting other regions.

Q. The IModel asks clubs/academies make a commitment to enter multiple teams in December, not even knowing that players/parents will commit to the team or decide to join or not depending on a team being an expected a T1 or T2 level team. What is the penalty to withdraw a team?

A. This would be determined by each District's rules and regulations for team registration into the Qualifying Season.

Q. I would like to hear more about your evaluation of the Pilot. It will be important to conduct a detailed analysis of how many more players registered or how many players are lost due to the IModel pilot. That may be difficult to collect as we are recovering from COVID (since we don't know if the increase or decrease will be due to COVID). What other criteria will you to define success?

A. Finding comparators will be hard because COVID has affected all our data. This is the work of the Pilot Project Planning Group (3PG) to determine what that data is going to be. The 3PG encourages everyone to share your concerns of what is going to happen so we can be sure we are collecting data that addresses those concerns.

Q. Can you provide any information on what a team budget would be?

A. How a team or a District might set their budget is a team by team, club/academy. The league fee (\$600- reduced from original fee of \$800) has been set across the Central Region. Any other team cost will be set by the club/academies.

Q. Does that fee cover the District fee?

A. \$600 is the fee (Team/League Fee) to enter the League Play (both Qualifying Season and either Competitive 1 or 2 season).

Q. Do the club/academies or Districts have a choice here?

A. We are pilot testing the IModel in the Central Region. There are other options other than the IModel in terms of District only play.

Q. If this is a "pilot" could this not have been piloted at U13 as opposed to all age groups? As mentioned, it may or may not work, so why impact all age groups?

A. The decision was made that in order to understand what the transition from one age to the other will look like that multiple age groups were chosen.

SCHEDULING

Q. Will there be a built in "vacation break" between Qualifying and Competitive 1 and Competitive 2?

A. Proper periodization has been considered via a scheduled 2-week break in the summer between the Qualifying season and Competitive 1&2, as well as a recommended 6-week recovery period after season completion.

Q. When does the qualifying start? (Some club/academies may not have access to fields until mid May) and there is a very small window for the "qualifying season" that may have many games. How does this support proper player development and allow for practice and rest?

A. The Qualifying season is determined by the Districts with grass field availability as a factor. The formats to use can be conditioned by field availability and number of teams – however we strongly ensuring enough competition for proper evaluation. 3PG will work with the Districts to support them in their planning aimed to align with the availability of grass fields.

Q. The current version of the I-Model Pilot proposes a different number of weeks of play for Competitive Level 1 and Level 2. Will the same number of games be played whether a team qualifies for regional or not? Will players and their families accept the uncertainty of not knowing what level, the team/players will compete at the time of registrations?

A. The new IModel concept is innovative and will provide new development opportunities within the Soccer 4 life competitive stream.

The intention is to integrate stakeholders and existing competitive structures, with the goal to unify the soccer community and continue moving the game forward by introducing some novel but rational solutions and concepts that addresses several difficult questions, length of the season, self-determination, adequate level of competition, promotion & relegation, seasonal periodization, and affordability.

The variety of the competitive conditions will give these players an equitable opportunity to develop, which will contribute immensely to best prepare their next steps.

By sharing information on the technical benefits of this new format with parents of those players at the District level it will increase their understanding the benefit for their child to be involved in this environment from a development perspective

Q. Will the final/important games in the Qualifying Season be played in mid-June which is exam time for high school students across Ontario? Exam time is very important, especially from grade 10 on and players should not have to choose between studying for exams and playing important soccer games.

A. The concept also takes into consideration the importance for our youth players to have a good balance between family, sports, and education. Life Balance is key for every athlete and the process will assist players on how to become a successful College or University Student athlete in the future

Q. Can you share any analysis you have done regarding availability of 11v11 fields before late May, October, and November, including lit fields on Fall evenings?

A. 3PG had an earlier discussion with the Districts regarding fields. There is a lot of flexibility in that early part of the season in what the format will be to align with the availability of grass fields. In terms of when we are looking into November (Competitive 1 Championship) that event will be held at the Ontario Soccer Centre, the first weekend in November.

Q. Can a team register for a winter league that ends in April roughly or is this the only competition for a team yearly?

A. We are able to have teams play within an indoor environment so they can be apart of both Indoor and Outdoor. There may be overlap at the ends of the season based in when Indoors start/finish. We will be communicating with indoor leagues and looking at how to align the two seasons.

Q. I am concerned about the focus on the outcome/score of the games, especially for the U13/14 age groups. At least for the first half of the season, teams will be coached to win rather than to develop (and retain) players. How does that align with Canada Soccer's LTPD plan and the move to standards-based leagues?

A. The framework features suitable long-term player development principles from Canada Soccer and takes into consideration the player stage of development. (readiness). The framework features and **supports** suitable and **sustainable** LTPD principles.

Q. Our understanding was that the IModel was weekend competition. Is this now not the case?

A. The Districts will determine what the Qualifying Season will look like. The Competitive 1 Season will have games scheduled on weekends and weekdays. It is not exclusively weekends.

Q. The regional league previously had 24 teams per age; now at 16; adding in a lot of academy teams. So why reduce the number of teams, to 8 to 14, and have fewer regional opportunities for Soccer for Life players?

A. The IModel provides at least 14 teams (girls/boys) at each age and gender. The only time we would look at less than the minimum number is if we have a shortage of applicants at that age and gender. The current maximum number is meant to ensure it is an appropriate level of competition based on the projection of number of teams competing for the Competitive 1 Season.

Q. If club/academies do not have access to turf fields, will the District/OS facilitate rentals for October rentals?

A. Field availability is on 3PG's radar, and we will be in a better position once we know how many teams are entering the IModel. Ontario Soccer will be providing fields for the Competitive 1 Championship event at Ontario Soccer the first weekend in November.

Q. How will IModel work in our District when we don't have teams that don't run year round competitive programs? Some start training in April.

A. The Qualifying Season is operated by the District, and they will choose the format that best addresses the specific challenges within that District including grass field availability.

STANDARDS

Q. Can a coach who is in the process of going through a C Licence be allowed to be the Head Coach?

A. The present coaching qualification requirement for a Head Coach in the IModel is C-Licence Certified. We will address strategies on how to support the Head Coach qualification requirement once we have determined how many Head Coaches are not fully C-Licence certified.

Q. Can the Technical Director of a club/academy be the head coach of a team?

A. **Edited to clarify February 1, 2022** Technical Directors are not permitted to be registered on the Team Roster Report as the Coach of a team or squad but can attend a competition in the technical area any time prior to, during or after the game provided, they are listed on the game sheet.

April 13, 2022 *Please note some questions raised have been combined to enable a more comprehensive response

Q. What happens if a team isn't club licensed can they still qualify?

A. We recommend that clubs and academies go to the Canada Soccer website to prepare for the QSP application window to open during Q1 of 2022 in Ontario

PLAYER REGISTRATION

Q. Can a player from Competitive 1 play in a Competitive 2 team (same club/academy)?

A. No, they can only register to one team. Teams enter the IModel at the Qualifying Season as 1 Team per club/academy per Age per Gender and they will either be streamed into Competitive 1 or Competitive 2 depending on the results of the Qualifying Season.

Q. Can a player from a District team in the same club/academy play in the IModel game and vice versa, i.e., is there player movement allowed?

A. Player movement is allowed within same Club or Academy in the same season. There will be a Player transfer window to adjust rosters; example: injuries and Call ups are allowed.

Q. Have you estimated how this will impact multi-sport athletes? Many current regional teams rosters include many multi-sport athletes. Playing into October and November will force multi-sport athletes to choose between soccer and hockey/ basketball/skating.

A. Ontario Soccer has always encouraged (especially the younger athletes) to be involved in multiple sports. It comes down to balance and creating that balance between home life, studies in relation to sports at their school to what their going to be doing at this level. This is at the Soccer for Life level.

The Districts will continue to offer programming to all levels of commitment. October and first weekend in November play will only affect a very reduced number of teams across the Central Region.

Not all multi-sport athletes will require to choose between sports. In order to achieve life balance, some athletes may require to adjust the amount of participation based on the competition level they are competing at.

Q. What is to prevent teams from jumping from club/academy to club/academy due to reset?

A. The model offers a yearly qualification versus the present model. That will encourage player retention and achievable goal setting. There is no player or team movement allowed from club/academy to club/academy during the season.

Q. In the best of times (let alone pandemic times) there are many families that cannot afford the costs of having their child or children compete in this type of league. There are Districts that serve a large number of families that live below the poverty line. This model,

by not offering alternative levels of affordable competition discriminates against a large number of families. Are we not supposed to be inclusive? Giving such a player financial support will still entail that player going out of his/her community to compete. Time will be a problem as will transportation in many cases. Families also have their pride to think about. This model discriminates against the poor.

A. There are always supports available for families in many different ways.

Q. For allowing the moving of players within the club/academy must the player being moved be from the same competitive season type team? i.e., U15 team using a U14 player from the club/academy however the U14 team did not qualify for Competitive 1 Season and are playing District?

A. All players from the beginning of the competition must be with that one particular team throughout the course of the whole season. You will not be able to bring on other players after the deadline. Player movement is allowed within same Club or Academy in the same season. Player transfer window to adjust roster. example: injuries. Call ups allowed as per Season/league rules

Q. Presentation indicates U13-16, what is the plan for U17/U18 in Central Region?

A. U17 and U18 will now be a part of the IModel – season end to be adjusted for U18

COMPETITION

Q. What is there to offer a "B" team from a club/academy that is not permitted to participate in qualifying?

A. All levels below the IModel remains untouched, so Districts, can tailor their leagues/programs to best suit their membership needs.

Q. So that would be a District Level 2 League that is being offered to a (potentially) strong team?

A. The IModel drivers are a combination of league criteria and player readiness, with the vision to equally serve all members, allowing even the smallest organization the possibility of being placed at the adequate competitive level based on merit. (real-time player assessment).

Q. Considering that we are talking about development, having a qualifying phase for this model where not every team will succeed and have a spot in the model (still having the opportunity to play the District leagues), don't you think that can cause players leaving these club/academies that don't qualify? That would bring the District leagues level down for sure.

A. The model offers a yearly qualification versus the present model (2 years). That will encourage player retention and achievable goal setting. We will collect data on this factor to ensure that the IModel is supporting that.

Q. Is there scouting/identification opportunities within this league for Team Ontario?

A. No player will get overlooked independent of where they play. For players outside the Talented Pathway we have a recommendation process on the Ontario Soccer website. In the spring of 2022, players can be recommended to Talent on Location Days for potential selection into the Provincial Xcel Screening Competition

Q. How will Districts ensure that the fixtures in the Qualifying Season are fair? Unless there is a complete round-robin scheduled strong teams could end up drawn to play each other while weaker teams could be afforded an easier qualifying set of fixtures. This would mean that the teams qualifying for regional aren't necessarily the top teams.

A. It is recommended that consultation takes place with technical leads within the Districts to determine which are the strongest teams that should be vying for a spot in the Qualifying Season.

Q. Fair consideration must be given to the number of teams per District entering "competitive 1" in this qualifying model. Many smaller Districts (with few OPDL clubs) have a large number of teams in the current regional league. Cross-district level of play must be considered. In OPDL-heavy Districts, their regional teams can often be weaker due to their top players being in the OPDL. Not giving this serious consideration will result in a lower level of play in the IModel. We would be very interested in understanding how you will address this.

A. The IModel drivers are a combination of league criteria and player readiness, with the vision to equally serve all members, allowing even the smallest organization the possibility of being placed at the adequate competitive level based on merit. (real-time assessment).

Q. Does this replace OPDL? If not where this fall in the development model?

A. Overall the IModel brings all members together and bridges many gaps giving more relevance to players in the Soccer 4 Life stream and does not intend to replace any existing level.

Q. Will there be more of a strict guideline as to how the Districts run the Qualifying Season?

A- The Qualifying Season is determined by the Districts – the formats to use can be conditioned by grass field availability and number of teams. The IModel planning group will be available to provide consultation to the Districts if requested.

Q. Can smaller Districts with few club/academies enter a District Team?

A. If an agreement is achieved between all club/academies and the District Association to create one team from the existing player pool - that team could join a neighboring District at the Qualifying Season.

Q. What is the reasoning for only allowing 1 team per club/academy in an age group? If you want the best of the best for the Regional portion and they happen to be in same club/academy, should it not be allowed?

A. The IModel encourages player movement not team movement and by allowing only one team we will enhance the competition in all divisions and that will be a critical component for player development.

Q. At older age, say U16 Girls, or any division for that matter, where there are fewer total teams, is it realistic that there will be enough teams not qualifying and then having the Districts scramble to create divisions amongst the total number of Districts?

A. A District Association can only run an IModel Division with a minimum of 6 suitable teams. They may need to amalgamate with other divisions to achieve that minimum.

Q. To clarify, there will be no legacy from season to season, i.e., a U14 team that wins the Championship Showcase in a season will start fresh as a U15 team the following season and enter through the Qualifying Season? If this is the case, do you have concerns about blowouts in that Qualifying Season and losing players from the sport?

A. The model encourages player movement but also considers stage of development (nonlinear development). Due to the improvement of the competition level in Competitive 1 & 2 in year one, we see the possibility of the competition level raising within the qualifying phase of year 2 of the IModel

Q. So, this would be what all teams would have to enter or do teams have the option of just going into Competitive 2 with the District or do all teams have to qualify even for District?

A. Clubs and Academies are not obliged to populate any age group in the IModel. Any other District levels below the IModel remain untouched, so Districts, can tailor their leagues/programs to best suit their membership needs.

Q. With only 1 team allowed per club/academy to represent in the Comp 1, does a club/academy which has more than 1 team in an age group now forced to play the 2nd team in comp 2? If so, the presentation's first slide indicates treating all as equal. If this is the case, then why wouldn't we allow a 2nd team into comp 1 from same club/academy, if that club/academy is able to qualify?

A. We are focussed on creating a best with best environment when we move with players moving into Competitive 1, Technical Assessment of the level of player in where they are presently with their club/academy should be taken into consideration before

putting forth a team to be able to qualify. This will be important as we move forward to try improving the base of player across the Province when we start looking at the IModel which helps create a better environment and experience for those players that those players are playing at the right level based on their abilities.

A club/academy is not allowed to enter 2 teams in the qualifying rounds. The team either ends up in Competitive 1 or Competitive 2 depending how well they do in the Qualifying Season.

Q. Why the difference between the max number of girls and boys?

A. There is no longer a difference – it is a maximum 14 teams per age group in each gender.

Q. You could have a situation where all teams within a particular District qualifying season are more skilled than teams in another District qualifying season, yet only one will move on. So how is that putting best vs best?

A. The 2022 pilot will be a great opportunity to test the model where we will gather data enabling us to make any changes that are necessary to improve player development.

The objective in the future is for more teams to qualify for the Competitive 1 phase. Based on the present criteria within the IModel, this will be determined after accessing subjectively and objectively the competition level and quality of play within both Competitive 1 & 2 in year one.