

DIRECTOR OF HOCKEY OPERATIONS

West Elk Hockey Association | Gunnison Valley, Colorado

The West Elk Hockey Association (WEHA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation dedicated to promoting the growth and advancement of ice hockey in the Gunnison Valley. WEHA provides a safe, positive, and development-focused hockey experience for approximately 550 adult and youth players and their families.

POSITION OVERVIEW

The Director of Hockey Operations (DHO) serves as the head of WEHA's hockey product and is responsible for the overall leadership, design, and execution of all on-ice and player development programming. This role ensures a consistently high-quality, development-centered experience for players, coaches, and families across all age groups — from Learn to Skate through competitive 19U and adult programming. The DHO works in close partnership with the Executive Director and Board of Directors and serves as the primary authority on all hockey-related decisions. The ideal candidate is an experienced hockey professional capable of coaching a WEHA travel team (12U A, 14U A, or Girls 19U) in addition to managing program leadership responsibilities.

Location: Gunnison Valley / Crested Butte, Colorado (On-site, rink-based)

Employment Type: Full-Time, Exempt, Year-Round

Reports To: Executive Director and WEHA Board of Directors

Salary Range: \$45,000 – \$60,000 depending on qualifications and experience; benefits negotiable

Supervises: All seasonal and volunteer coaching staff; on-ice development staff; goaltending coordinator

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Hockey Program Leadership & Player Development

- Design, implement, and continuously refine a comprehensive association-wide player development model aligned with USA Hockey's American Development Model (ADM) across all age groups (6U through 19U and Girls programs).
- Attend all relevant league association meetings as WEHA's official representative; advocate proactively for WEHA's best interests, specifically the WCHL meeting in May and Mountain Select Tryouts in the spring and fall of each year.
- Establish consistent, age-appropriate practice plans, skill progression benchmarks, and team structure standards across all levels of play.
- Oversee all aspects of seasonal planning: tryouts, team formation, roster management, in-season roster movement, and end-of-season evaluation.
- Lead or directly participate in on-ice practices, clinics, camps, and skill sessions (skating, shooting, goaltending, etc.) as needed.
- Develop and execute specialty programming including off-season camps, on-ice clinics, skills competitions, and dryland training opportunities.
- Monitor quality and consistency of on-ice instruction across all teams through regular attendance at practices and games.
- Track individual player development progress and provide feedback to players, families, and coaches on a structured basis.

- Promote multi-sport participation, long-term athlete development, and athlete well-being in all programming decisions.

2. Coaching Staff Management & Development

- Recruit, interview, hire, onboard, and evaluate all seasonal head coaches, assistant coaches, and on-ice development staff.
- Oversee WEHA referees, coaches, team managers, tournament directors, equipment, and uniforms.
- Lead regular coaches' meetings (minimum monthly) to align staff on program philosophy, practice standards, team updates, and player welfare.
- Provide mentorship, structured professional development resources, and ongoing coaching education to all staff.
- Ensure 100% compliance with USA Hockey coaching certification requirements for all levels; maintain current records of certifications for all coaches.
- Prepare and maintain a comprehensive Coaching Handbook defining WEHA's philosophy, expectations, and operational standards.
- Recruit, hire, onboard, and retain competent, qualified staff across all operational areas.
- Conduct annual performance reviews for all direct reports; set clear expectations and provide regular feedback.
- Coordinate and manage volunteers for games, tournaments, events, and administrative functions.
- Conduct annual performance evaluations for all coaching staff and make staffing recommendations to the Executive Director.
- Set and uphold clear expectations for sportsmanship, player safety, accountability, and conduct for all coaches and staff.

3. Tryouts, Rosters & Team Composition

- Design and execute the annual tryout process for all competitive (travel) teams, ensuring a fair, transparent, and player-centered evaluation experience.
- Hold final determination authority over seasonal competitive rosters across all divisions, including 12U A, 14U A, Girls 19U, and other travel levels.
- Manage in-season roster movement between teams, ensuring compliance with CAHA, WCHL, and USA Hockey eligibility rules.
- Oversee player registration into USA Hockey and maintain accurate, current team rosters and league documentation.
- Oversee the Learn to Skate and Intro to Hockey programs to ensure a strong developmental pipeline and long-term player retention.

4. Scheduling, Ice Management & Logistics

- Oversee WEHA referees, coaches, team managers, tournament directors, equipment, and uniforms.
- Coordinate all ice scheduling for youth and adult programming in partnership with rink management and the Executive Director.
- Manage game scheduling for all competitive and house league teams in compliance with WCHL, CAHA, and USA Hockey guidelines.
- Oversee and manage all aspects of Adult League operations and scheduling including hiring, supervision, and evaluation of the Adult League Supervisor, if applicable.

- Coordinate travel logistics for tournament participation, including team travel, lodging recommendations, and communication with tournament hosts.
- Ensure timely communication of schedules, changes, and updates to coaches, team managers, and families.
- Oversee equipment and jersey needs, inventory tracking, and coordination with the Equipment Committee.

5. Family & Community Engagement

- Serve as the primary point of contact for all hockey-related inquiries from players, families, and coaches.
- Conduct pre-season parent meetings to communicate WEHA's player development philosophy, team expectations, and seasonal plans.
- Respond promptly and professionally to all hockey-related family and member inquiries (target: within 48 hours).
- Lead conflict resolution processes involving players, coaches, and families in a professional, solutions-focused manner.
- Host post-season forums with coaches and families to gather feedback and inform future programming improvements.
- Serve as an ambassador for WEHA in the Gunnison Valley community; actively promote hockey participation through school outreach, community events, and local partnerships.
- Support fundraising, sponsorship, and community relations initiatives in coordination with the Executive Director.

6. Compliance, Safety & Organizational Standards

- Ensure full compliance with USA Hockey, CAHA, and WCHL policies, rules, and safety standards at all times.
- Maintain current SafeSport certification and ensure all coaching staff are certified; serve as an organizational SafeSport resource.
- Manage insurance documentation, player waivers, and risk management records for all on-ice programming.
- Represent WEHA at CAHA, WCHL, and USA Hockey meetings and clinics as directed by the Executive Director.
- Stay current with national trends in player development, ADM best practices, and youth hockey programming through ongoing professional development.
- Collaborate with the Executive Director on strategic planning, program budgeting related to hockey operations, and long-range association growth goals.

QUALIFICATIONS & CREDENTIALS

Education & Experience

- Bachelor's degree in sports management, kinesiology, recreation management, or a related field preferred; demonstrated equivalent experience considered.
- Minimum of five (5) years of ice hockey coaching experience, with at least two (2) years in a leadership or program management role.
- Competitive hockey playing background at the high school level or higher strongly preferred; junior, college, or professional playing experience is a significant advantage.

- Prior experience building, managing, or growing a youth hockey program at the association or club level preferred.
- Demonstrable understanding of USA Hockey's American Development Model (ADM) and age-appropriate development philosophy.

Required Certifications

- USA Hockey Coaching Certification — minimum Level 2 (Level 3 or higher preferred); must be obtained within 60 days of hire if not current.
- SafeSport Certification — current or must be obtained within 30 days of hire.
- USA Hockey Registrar Certification or willingness to obtain promptly.
- Valid driver's license and ability to travel for league meetings, tournaments, and CAHA/WCHL events.
- Must pass a background check as required by USA Hockey and WEHA policy.

Skills & Competencies

- Advanced ice skating ability; physically capable of leading on-ice sessions and coaching a competitive travel team.
- Excellent interpersonal communication skills with diverse stakeholders: players (ages 5–19), parents, coaches, volunteers, and Board members.
- Strong organizational and administrative capabilities; proficiency with scheduling tools, Google Workspace/Microsoft Office, and sports management platforms.
- Demonstrated ability to manage and mentor a team of volunteer and paid coaches with varying levels of experience.
- Ability to maintain composure and exercise sound judgment in high-pressure, emotionally charged situations involving players and families.
- Availability for evenings, weekends, and holidays consistent with hockey season demands; flexibility for travel.

Personal Attributes

- Deep passion for hockey and commitment to developing both the athletic and personal character of young players.
- Collaborative, player-first leadership philosophy that balances competitiveness with long-term participation and enjoyment.
- Community-minded; enthusiastic about growing hockey in a mountain town environment.
- High personal integrity, positive energy, and a commitment to serving as a role model for players, families, and coaches.
- Self-directed and accountable; comfortable working in a dynamic, volunteer-driven nonprofit environment.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Salary range of \$45,000–\$60,000, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Benefits package negotiable; may include health insurance contribution and paid time off. Additional income opportunities exist through WEHA-sponsored camps, clinics, and private instruction. Housing assistance may be available.

HOW TO APPLY

Submit a cover letter describing your coaching philosophy and relevant experience, a résumé, and three professional references to: Director@wehockey.org. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled. WEHA is an equal opportunity employer committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for all players, families, and staff.