



**EXPANSION PLAYER
DISTRIBUTION PROCESS
MANUAL**

2026-2027 Season



Table of Contents

Key Dates	2
General Expansion Rules & Tampering	3
Phase One	4
Phase Two	6
Phase Three	10
Phase Four	11
Phase Five	12
Phase Six	14



KEY DATES

Phase 1:

- May 28, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 1 Negotiation List Submission Deadline (*Existing Teams*)*
- June 1, 2026, 12pm ET – Preliminary Negotiation Window Opens (*All Teams*)
- June 2, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 1 Signing Period Opens (*All Teams, Only Existing Teams can sign players*)
- June 3, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 1 Signing Period Closes
- June 3, 2026, 5pm ET – Phase 1 Protection List Submission Deadline (*Existing Teams*)

Phase 2:

- June 4, 2026, 3pm ET – Exclusive Negotiation Target List (ENTL) and Expansion Foundational Offer (EFO) Ranking List Submission Deadline (*Expansion Teams*)*
- June 5, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 2 Signing Period Opens (*Expansion Teams*)
- June 8, 2026, 1pm ET – Phase 2 Signing Period Closes
- June 8, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 2 Selection Process Begins (if necessary) (*Expansion Teams*)
- June 8, 2026, 5pm ET – Phase 2 Selection Process Ends (if necessary)

Phase 3:

- June 10, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 3 Signing Period Opens (*All Teams*)
- June 12, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 3 Signing Period Closes
- June 12, 2026, 5pm ET – Phase 3 Protection List Submission Deadline (*Existing Teams*)

Phase 4:

- June 14, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 4 Signing Period Opens (*Expansion Teams*)
- June 15, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 4 Signing Period Closes
- June 15, 2026, 4pm ET – Phase 4 Selection Process Begins (if necessary) (*Expansion Teams*)
- June 15, 2026, 6pm ET – Phase 4 Selection Process Ends (if necessary)

Phase 5:

- June 16, 2026, 9am ET-6pm ET – Phase 5 Signing Period #1 (*Existing Teams*)
- June 18, 2026, 9am ET-6pm ET – Phase 5 Signing Period #2 (*Existing Teams*)

Entry Draft: June 17, 2026

Phase 6:

- June 19, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 6 Open Signing Period (*All Teams*)



GENERAL EXPANSION RULES

- **Expansion Roster Freeze** – No transactions other than those permitted by the Expansion Roster Protocols are permitted from the beginning of Phase 1 to the end of Phase 4. Roster Freeze is lifted beginning on June 16, 2026 at 9am ET.
 - Freeze includes all trades, contract extensions, and signings of players not included in the expansion process (e.g. previous PWHL players who were not part of the league for the 2025-2026 season).
- **Cap on Players Lost** - Existing teams can lose a maximum of four (4) players who are under contract for the 2026-2027 season in Phases 1-4. There is no limit on the number of players on expiring contracts lost from an existing team's 2025-2026 end of season roster.
- **Expansion Team Roster Size** - Expansion teams will have ten (10) players under contract for the 2026-2027 season at the conclusion of Phase 4.

TAMPERING

- If the league determines that a team is negotiating/has verbally agreed to terms with any player other than players currently on their roster prior to the Pre-Phase 1 Negotiation Period, the proposed contract for the player(s) in question will not be approved, and the GM and associated team staff will face additional consequences at the League's discretion.
- If the league determines that a team is negotiating with any player who is not currently on their roster or is not on the Phase 1 Master Negotiation List during Phase 1, the proposed contract for the player(s) in question will not be approved, and the GM and associated team staff will face additional consequences at the League's discretion.
- If the league determines that a team is negotiating/has verbally agreed to terms with any player who they are otherwise not permitted to contact based on these Expansion Roster Construction Protocols, the proposed contract for the player(s) in question will not be approved, and the GM and associated team staff will face additional consequences at the League's discretion.



PHASE ONE

Existing Team Foundational Signings/Protections

Important Dates:

- May 28, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 1 Negotiation List Submission Deadline
- June 1, 2026, 12pm ET – Preliminary Negotiation Window Opens
- June 2, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 1 Signing Period Opens
- June 3, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 1 Signing Period Closes
- June 3, 2026, 5pm ET – Phase 1 Protection List Submission Deadline

Rules & Procedures

General Rules:

- Existing teams will protect three (3) players who are under contract with their team or have their rights held for the 2026-2027 season.
- Players whose rights are held for the 2026-2027 season must receive a qualifying offer in order to be protected in Phase 1. A qualifying offer must provide a 3% increase on the Player's 2025-2026 salary on a one-year contract for the 2026-2027 season.
- Players on expiring contracts who appear on the Phase 1 Master Negotiation List* are eligible to sign with any Existing team during Phase 1, any Player signed to a new contract in Phase 1 will automatically count as one of the signing team's three (3) Phase 1 protections.
- Existing teams can lose a maximum of one (1) player on an expiring contract in Phase 1.
- Players on expiring contracts who appear on the Phase 1 Master Negotiation List* can:
 - (a) sign with any existing team
 - (b) can discuss contract terms with Expansion Teams.

Phase 1 Master Negotiation List:

- Prior to the start of the negotiation period, existing teams will each submit a list* of up to ten (10) players on expiring contracts that they are interested in signing as one of their three (3) Phase 1 protections/signings. Each team's list* must include any players on expiring contracts who are on their own roster in addition to any players on other teams' roster they'd like to speak with. Phase 1 Negotiation lists are due to the league by May 28, 2026 at 3pm ET.*



- Only Players on the Phase 1 Master Negotiation List* can be contacted and signed in Phase 1.
 - Existing teams are permitted to contact any players from their 2025-2026 roster during Phase 1, but only players on the Phase 1 Master Negotiation List* can be signed in Phase 1
- All 12 teams are permitted to negotiate with Players on the Phase 1 Master Negotiation List*, but only existing teams are eligible to sign players in Phase 1.

Pre-Phase 1 Negotiation Period:

- Beginning at 12pm ET on June 1, 2026, teams are permitted to begin contacting Players who appear on the Phase 1 Master Negotiation List*.
- Existing teams are permitted to reach agreement with players and submit them to the league, but no contracts will be officially processed by the league until the start of the Phase 1 Signing Period beginning on June 2, 2026 at 12pm ET.

Phase 1 Signing Period Contract Submission and Approval Procedures

- Contracts can be officially submitted to the league beginning at 12pm ET on June 2, 2026 and ending at 3pm ET on June 3, 2026 (The Phase 1 Signing Period).
- Contract terms can be submitted to the league during the Pre-Phase 1 Negotiation Period, but will not be processed until 12pm ET on June 2, 2026. Contract term submission emails sent in during the Pre-Phase 1 Negotiation Period will be considered to have been received at 12pm ET on June 2, 2026 (the start of the Phase 1 Signing Period) regardless of when the email is sent during the Pre-Phase 1 Negotiation Period.

Contract Submission & Cap on Players Lost

- For the purposes of determining which team can sign a player if multiple teams submit terms on different players from the same existing team, whichever team submitted terms first based on when the email is timestamped in the league's inbox, will be allowed to sign the player.
- If two teams submit terms on players from the same existing team during the Pre-Phase 1 Negotiation Period, those submissions will be considered to have been received at the same time as they would be processed by the league at 12pm ET on the Phase 1 start date.
- In the event that the emails are received at the same time (email is timestamped at the same time in the league's inbox) with offers concerning multiple players on the same existing team, the offer with the larger average annual value (AAV) will be approved.

Phase 1 Protection List Submission

- Existing teams will submit their final Phase 1 Protection List to the league no later than 5pm ET on June 3, 2026.



- A team's protection list must include any Player(s) signed by that team during the Phase 1 Signing Period.

PHASE TWO

Expansion Team Foundational Signing Period

Important Dates

- June 4, 2026, 3pm ET – Exclusive Negotiation Target List (ENTL) and Expansion Foundational Offer (EFO) Ranking List Submission Deadline*
- June 5, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 2 Signing Period Opens
- June 8, 2026, 1pm ET – Phase 2 Signing Period Closes
- June 8, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 2 Selection Process Begins (if necessary)
- June 8, 2026, 5pm ET – Phase 2 Selection Process Ends (if necessary)

Rules & Procedures

General Rules:

- Expansion teams will sign five (5) players by the conclusion of Phase 2.
- All players who were on a 2025-2026 PWHL roster to end the season and were not protected in Phase 1 are eligible to be signed by Expansion teams. This includes both players under contract for the 2026-2027 season and players on expiring contracts.
- Existing teams can lose a maximum of three (3) players who are under contract for the 2026-2027 season in Phase 2. There is no limit on the number of players on expiring contracts lost from an existing team's 2025-2026 end of season roster.
- If an Expansion team(s) has not signed five (5) players by the conclusion of the Phase 2 Signing Period, team(s) will select enough players in a post-signing period selection process to ensure that they complete Phase 2 with a total of five (5) players on their roster.
 - Only players under contract for the 2026-2027 season are eligible for selection.

Exclusive Negotiation Target Lists (ENTL):

- Expansion teams will submit a list of twenty (20) players they are interested in signing as one of their five (5) Phase 2 Foundational Signings no later than 3pm ET on June 4, 2026. List must include players who are under contract for the 2026-2027 season and players on expiring contracts.*
- Expansion teams cannot negotiate with, sign, or select any player in Phase 2 that does not appear on their ENTL.



- Players on expiring contracts who appear on an Expansion team's ENTL can only be signed by that Expansion team in Phase 2 or Phase 3.
- Only players who appear on a team's initial ENTL are eligible to receive the Expansion Foundational Offer (EFO), a Foundational Player Offer (FPO), or be selected in the Foundational Roster Completion (if necessary).
- Should an Expansion team run out of players on their ENTL prior to signing/selecting five (5) players, the team can request to add additional players to their ENTL. Additional players added to a team's ENTL are subject to league approval, and are not eligible to receive the EFO, FPO, or be selected in the Foundational Roster Completion.
- By 5pm ET on June 4, 2026, the league will distribute* the following information regarding Expansion teams' ENTL:
 - Existing teams will receive a list of players from their end of season 2025-2026 roster, regardless of contract status, that appear on any expansion team's ENTL. The list will not specify which Expansion team(s) placed each player on their ENTL, or how many expansion teams included each player.
 - The PWHLPA will receive an aggregate list of all players included on any Expansion team's ENTL. The list will not specify which team(s) placed each player on their ENTL, or how many expansion teams included each player.

Expansion Foundational Offer (EFO) Rules:

- Each Expansion team may acquire one player on an expiring contract by issuing the EFO, which is a binding offer requiring that the player sign with the offering Expansion team.
- If multiple Expansion teams offer the EFO to the same player, the Player will choose which team they sign with and can further negotiate the terms of their agreement.
- A player must appear on an Expansion team's initial ENTL* in order to be offered the EFO.
- The EFO provides the following terms:
 - Player's 2026-2027 salary will be no less than \$100,000 or the Player's 2025-2026 salary (whichever is greater).
 - Player determines the length of the contract between 1-4 years.
 - Players who sign a multiyear deal will receive an upfront \$20k payment which will be charged to the signing team's salary cap in \$5k increments in each of the next 4 seasons.
 - Salaries in additional years will increase by a minimum of 3% each year.
 - Contract is guaranteed regardless of contract length.
 - If player elects a multiyear deal, player can choose to spread the total value of the contract evenly over the guaranteed years of the deal

Expansion Foundational Offer (EFO) Procedures:

- By 3pm ET on June 4, 2026, Expansion teams will provide a list of four (4) players on expiring contracts, ranked in their order of preference, that they would consider offering an EFO.



- At 12pm ET on June 5, 2026 (the start of the Phase 2 Signing Period), the league will process the first round of EFOs as follows:
 - If a Player is ranked first on only one Expansion team's ranked list, the league will send an email to the signing Expansion team, Player, Player's Agent, and the PWHLPA notifying all parties that the player is being assigned to the offering Expansion team and that the Player has until June 9, 2026 at 12pm ET to respond to the assigning email with confirmation of the number of years they are choosing to sign for.
 - If a Player is ranked first on multiple teams' ranked list, the league will send an email to the offering Expansion teams, the Player, Player's Agent, and the PWHLPA notifying all parties that the player has received the EFO from multiple teams and can begin negotiations with those teams. The parties can negotiate until 12pm ET on June 6, 2026, at which point whichever team the Player agrees to sign with will respond to the league's email with all of the relevant terms of the agreement, including years and salary.
- If multiple teams ranked the same Player as their first choice for the EFO, the league will process a second round of EFO on June 6, 2026 at 1pm ET as follows:
 - If a Player is ranked second on only one of the remaining Expansion team's ranked list, the league will send an email to the signing Expansion team, Player, Player's Agent, and the PWHLPA notifying all parties that the player is being assigned to the offering Expansion team and that the Player has until June 9, 2026 at 12pm ET to respond to the assigning email with confirmation of the number of years they are choosing to sign for.
 - If a Player is ranked second on multiple remaining expansion teams' ranked list, the league will send an email to the offering Expansion teams, the Player, Player's Agent, and the PWHLPA notifying all parties that the player has received the EFO from multiple teams and can begin negotiations with those teams. The parties can negotiate until 12pm ET on June 7, 2026, at which point whichever team the Player agrees to sign with will respond to the league's email with all of the relevant terms of the agreement, including years and salary.
- If multiple teams ranked the same Player as their second choice for the EFO, the league will process a third round of EFO on June 7, 2026 at 1pm ET as follows:
 - If a Player is ranked third on only one of the remaining Expansion team's ranked list, the league will send an email to the signing Expansion team, Player, Player's Agent, and the PWHLPA notifying all parties that the player is being assigned to the offering Expansion team and that the Player has until June 9, 2026 at 12pm ET to respond to the assigning email with confirmation of the number of years they are choosing to sign for.
 - If a Player is ranked third on multiple remaining expansion teams' ranked list, the league will send an email to the offering Expansion teams, the Player, Player's Agent, and the PWHLPA notifying all parties that the player has received the EFO from multiple teams and can begin negotiations with those teams. The parties can negotiate until 12pm ET on June 8, 2026, at which point whichever team the Player agrees to sign with will respond to



the league's email with all of the relevant terms of the agreement, including years and salary.

- If multiple teams ranked the same Player as their third choice for the EFO, the league will process a fourth round of EFO on June 8, 2026 at 1pm ET as follows:
 - The Player ranked 4th on the remaining Expansion team's ranked list will be sent an email by the league to the signing Expansion team, Player, Player's Agent, and the PWHLPA notifying all parties that the player is being assigned to the offering Expansion team and that the Player has until June 9, 2026 at 12pm ET to respond to the assigning email with confirmation of the number of years they are choosing to sign for.

Contract Terms & Salary Requirements:

- Players under contract who sign with an Expansion team in Phase 2 must sign for a salary equal to or greater than the average annual value (AAV) of their original contract.
- Players under contract who have multiple years remaining on their contract can choose to sign with an Expansion team in Phase 2 for fewer seasons than their original contract so long as the the average annual value (AAV) of the contract is equal to or greater than the original contract.
- There are no restrictions on the salary or contract length for players on expiring contracts in Phase 2 other than for Players who receive the EFO.

Foundational Player Offers (FPO):

- In Phase 2, any contract offer made by an Expansion team to a player on an expiring contract who appears on their initial ENTL and meets or exceeds the FPO Baseline Terms will qualify as a Foundational Player Offer (FPO).
- FPO Baseline Terms:
 - Contract Length: 2 years (minimum)
 - Salaries: Year 1: \$80k; Year 2: \$82.5k (minimum)
- An FPO is a non-binding contract offer, but requires that the Player who received the offer:
 - Signs with any team no later than Phase 3 if they have not already signed with an Expansion team in Phase 2.
 - Receives a contract with an average annual value (AAV) greater than or equal to \$73,125 (90% of the FPO Baseline Terms).

Foundational Roster Completion:

- At the conclusion of the Phase 2 signing period on June 8, 2026 at 1pm ET, if an Expansion team(s) has not signed five (5) players to their roster, the Foundational Roster Completion will be activated.
- The Foundational Roster Completion will begin at 3pm ET on June 8, 2026 and will conclude no later than 5pm ET on June 8, 2026.



- Number of selections will be determined based on the number of roster spots remaining to ensure that each Expansion team concludes Phase 2 with five (5) Players.
- Selection order, time between selections, and other procedural matters will be determined by the league between 1pm-3pm ET on June 8, 2026.
- If the Player an Expansion team is prepared to select is selected prior to their selection, the Expansion team will be granted a period of time (length to be determined) to sign a different player prior to making their selection.
- Only Players under contract or whose rights are held for the 2026-2027 season and appeared on an Expansion team's initial ENTL* are eligible for selection in the Foundational Roster Completion.
- Players selected in the Foundational Roster Completion will be subject to the terms (salary and years) from their current contract or rules governing a player whose rights are held for the 2026-2027 season.
- Expansion teams retain the rights to a selected Player for the Player's next active PWHL season and any subsequent years remaining on their current contract.

PHASE THREE

Preliminary Open Signing Period

Important Dates

- June 10, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 3 Signing Period Opens
- June 12, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 3 Signing Period Closes
- June 12, 2026, 5pm ET – Phase 3 Protection List Submission Deadline

Rules & Procedures

General Rules:

- Expansion teams will sign up to three (3) Players on expiring contracts.
- If an Expansion team(s) does not sign three (3) Players prior to the conclusion of the Phase 3 Signing Period, that Expansion team is eligible to sign additional Player(s) in the Phase 4 Expansion Signing Period to ensure that they complete the Expansion Phases (Phases 1-4) with ten (10) total players.
- Existing teams will protect three (3) players who are under contract with their team or have their rights held for the 2026-2027 season.
- Players whose rights are held for the 2026-2027 must receive a qualifying offer in order to be protected in Phase 3. A qualifying offer must provide a 3% increase on the Player's 2025-2026 salary on a one-year contract for the 2026-2027 season.



- Players on expiring contracts are eligible to sign with any team during Phase 3, any Player signed to a new contract by an Existing team in Phase 3 will automatically count as one of the signing team's three (3) Phase 3 protections.
- Players who received an FPO must sign with any team in Phase 3 for an AAV greater than or equal to \$73,125 (90% of the FPO Baseline Terms).
- Players appearing on an Expansion team's ENTL are eligible to sign with the listing Expansion team no later than Phase 3.

Phase 3 Protection List Submission

- Existing teams will submit their final Phase 3 Protection List to the league no later than 5pm ET on June 12, 2026.
- A team's protection list must include any Player(s) signed by that team during the Phase 3 Signing Period.

PHASE FOUR

Expansion Team Signing Period

Important Dates

- June 14, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 4 Signing Period Opens
- June 15, 2026, 3pm ET – Phase 4 Signing Period Closes
- June 15, 2026, 4pm ET – Phase 4 Selection Process Begins (if necessary)
- June 15, 2026, 6pm ET – Phase 4 Selection Process Ends (if necessary)

Rules & Procedures

General Rules:

- Expansion teams will sign players until they reach a total of ten (10) players on their roster by the conclusion of Phase 4 (minimum of two (2) players in Phase 4).
- All players who were on a 2025-2026 PWHL roster to end the season and were not protected or signed in Phases 1-3 are eligible to be signed by Expansion teams. This includes both players under contract for the 2026-2027 season and players on expiring contracts.
- Players on expiring contracts who appeared on an Expansion team's ENTL are ineligible to sign with that Expansion team in Phase 4.
- If an Expansion team(s) has not reached a total of ten (10) players on their roster by the conclusion of the Phase 4 Signing Period, team(s) will select enough players in a post-signing period selection process to ensure that they complete Phase 4 with a total of ten (10) players on their roster.



- Only players under contract for the 2026-2027 season are eligible for selection.

Contract Terms & Salary Requirements:

- Players under contract who sign with an Expansion team in Phase 4 must sign for a salary equal to or greater than the average annual value (AAV) of their original contract.
- Players under contract who have multiple years remaining on their contract can choose to sign with an Expansion team in Phase 4 for fewer seasons than their original contract so long as the the average annual value (AAV) of the contract is equal to or greater than the original contract.
- There are no restrictions on the salary or contract length for players on expiring contracts in Phase 4.

Expansion Roster Completion:

- At the conclusion of the Phase 4 signing period on June 15, 2026 at 3pm ET, if an Expansion team(s) has not reached ten (10) total players on their roster, the Expansion Roster Completion will be activated.
- The Expansion Roster Completion will begin at 4pm ET on June 15, 2026 and will conclude no later than 6pm ET on June 15, 2026.
- Number of selections will be determined based on the number of roster spots remaining to ensure that each Expansion team concludes Phase 4 with ten (10) total Players on their roster.
- Selection order, time between selections, and other procedural matters will be determined by the league between 3pm-4pm ET on June 15, 2026.
- Players selected in the Expansion Roster Completion will be subject to the terms (salary and years) from their current contract or rules governing a player whose rights are held for the 2026-2027 season.
- Expansion teams retain the rights to a selected Player for the Player's next active PWHL season and any subsequent years remaining on their current contract.

PHASE FIVE

Existing Team Exclusive Team Re-Signing Period

Important Dates

- June 16, 2026, 9am ET-6pm ET – Phase 5 Signing Period #1
- June 18, 2026, 9am ET-6pm ET – Phase 5 Signing Period #2



Rules & Procedures

General Rules:

- Existing teams are permitted to negotiate with and sign any remaining un-signed players on expiring contracts who were on their 2025-2026 roster and did not receive an FPO in Phase 2 during this Phase.
- Players whose rights are held for the 2026-2027 must receive a qualifying offer during either Phase 5 Signing Period #1 or Phase 5 Signing Period #2 in order to remain on their current team's roster beyond the start of the Phase 6 Open Signing Period on June 19, 2026 at 12pm ET. Players who do not receive a qualifying offer will be eligible to sign with all 12 teams at the start of the Open Signing Period. A qualifying offer must provide a 3% increase on the Player's 2025-2026 salary on a one-year contract for the 2026-2027 season.

PHASE SIX

Open Signing Period

Important Dates

- June 19, 2026, 12pm ET – Phase 6 Open Signing Period Begins

Rules & Procedures

General Rules:

- The following Players are eligible to sign with any of the 12 PWHL teams beginning on June 19, 2026 at 12pm ET:
 - Players on expiring contracts who were not signed and/or protected in Phases 1-5, and did not receive an FPO in Phase 2.
 - Players on expiring contracts who appeared on an Expansion team's ENTL* are ineligible to sign with that Expansion team in Phase 6.
 - Players whose rights are held for the 2026-2027 season that did not receive a qualifying offer by the end of Phase 5.
 - 2026 Draft Eligible Players who were not drafted during the 2026 Entry Draft.
 - Players with prior playing experience in the PWHL who did not finish the 2025-2026 season on a PWHL roster.
 - Players who were draft eligible for a prior PWHL Entry Draft.

** To ensure teams are able to operate competitively, this information will remain confidential and for internal use only.*