



**NEW ZEALAND
WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY
SYSTEM STRATEGY
2023-2033**

OUR VISION:

RUGBY IS A GAME FOR ALL

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INTRODUCING THE WOMEN & GIRLS IN RUGBY SYSTEM STRATEGY

Women's rugby is on an exciting journey. 2022 encapsulated the unique flavour and excitement of the women's game, culminating with an amazing Rugby World Cup victory by the Black Ferns. That result provided a wonderful foundation to launch a plan for enhancing the experience for women and girls in rugby for the next decade.

The game has always been blessed with passionate players, coaches, referees, administrators and supporters of women and girls in rugby. This system strategy provides the direction and priorities to drive the game forward to genuinely be engaging of women and girls across all aspects of the game.

As a system strategy, what follows here is a product of the rugby system – the people who live and love the game. The intention is that any group wanting to build or continue an engaging programme for women and girls can refer to this document at any point over the next ten years and have guidance borne from those familiar with the needs and desires of female participants.

There are already positive initiatives underway across the country to engage women and girls in rugby, however it is important to note that everyone is starting from different points. New Zealand Rugby has designed an implementation plan from these insights, as other stakeholders will to match the unique needs of women and girls in their respective regions.

NZR is very grateful for the significant stakeholder input that informed and shaped this system strategy. Thank you to everyone across rugby throughout Aotearoa who generously gave their time and perspectives to inform this strategy.

Engaging more women and girls in rugby is a change process. It will take time, focused effort, and a genuine desire by people – men and women – and organisations right throughout the system to operate and behave differently over time.

Rugby is a game for all, and I look forward to seeing how clubs, Provincial Unions, rugby communities and NZR turn this strategy into actionable change for the betterment of women and girls now and into the future.



Dame Patsy Reddy
New Zealand Rugby Chair



Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia tata
Ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tīna
Seek out distant horizons and cherish those
(horizons) you attain.

As a former player, this system strategy holds great importance. Having loved and played the game at all levels, I know the value a structured approach to recruiting, retaining, engaging and supporting women and girls in rugby will have across Aotearoa.

This mahi has been codesigned with participants in the system, and Māori rugby stakeholders have been a part of this consultation. This reflects the concept of the double-hulled canoe – waka hourua – where we navigate this journey together to ensure the best outcome for all.

The New Zealand Māori Rugby Board's four strategic pou – tātakitanga, puawaitanga, havoratanga and angitutanga – exist to ensure positive outcomes for Māori through rugby. The focus areas outlined in this system strategy will have a considerable impact on wāhine, kōhine and kōtiro involved in rugby, as well as the tāne who support them.

The elements of this strategy have been presented as a poi, which became an iconic part of the Rugby World Cup 2021 (played in 2022). We thank Ocean Design for their knowledge and manaaki that have helped reflect this mahi as a taonga for our rugby system.

Having poi as the central concept not only captures the enthusiasm that was generated around women's rugby during the tournament, but it also helps to continue that energy for generations of women and girls in rugby to come.

The whakatauki above acknowledges the mahi that past generations have put in (often with little resource) to get women and girls in rugby to this point. We acknowledge all the amazing horizons we have already attained, while continuing to seek out distant, aspirational horizons. I look forward to seeing the horizons that are pursued throughout the rugby system as a result of this strategy that guides us.



Dame Farah Palmer
New Zealand Māori
Rugby Board Chair



HOW WAS THIS SYSTEM STRATEGY DEVELOPED AND WHO WERE THE CONTRIBUTORS?

This system strategy for women and girls in rugby is the result of 1,547 hours of passionate input from 2,221 stakeholders across New Zealand's rugby landscape. That's the equivalent of 193 eight-hour days of insights from the rugby system. There are many organisations who are part of what makes up our rugby system: the national body New Zealand Rugby, New Zealand Māori Rugby Board, Pasifika Advisory Group, Super Rugby Clubs, Provincial Unions, clubs, marae, schools and other community organisations now and into the future.

This is a 10-year system strategy to set a shared direction and outcomes as we work to engage more women and girls (W&G) in rugby, across the rugby system. It encompasses females playing the game, as well as coaching, officiating, managing, governing, leading, or being involved in rugby in whatever way they choose. It looks at five focus areas that need to be shifted in an integrated way over time, so rugby can be **a game for all**.

While incremental progress has been made in women and girls rugby, this strategy provides the direction and priorities to drive the game forward to genuinely be engaging of women and girls across all aspects. The strategy is unashamedly based on data and insights, and includes a high-level description of the current state as seen by stakeholders of the game in July 2022. This provides a line in the sand for future comparison to reflect on the progress made as a rugby system in ten years' time.

The strategy is co-designed for all stakeholders across the rugby system to make progress individually, or ideally in collaboration with each other.

Stakeholder input into this strategy

- **76 hours** of interviews of people and organisations across the rugby system (individual and group).
- **1,938 responses** to the 41-question current participant survey (average of 16 mins, ~517 hours). 1,407 surveys via NZR registered members, 531 via social media.
- **189 women and girls rugby stakeholders attended** 4-hour in-person workshops (i.e., 756 hours). Volunteers, coaches, managers, referees, players, staff, and other interested people.
- **60 NZR executives and staff** attended 3-hour in-person workshops (i.e., 180 hours).
- **18 stakeholders** attended 1-hour virtual webinar (i.e., 18 hours).
- **488 strategic issues or opportunities** identified by rugby stakeholders.
- Collaborative implementation plans developed cross-regionally, with **21 individual implementation ideas** provided through online feedback.
- Input via **desktop review** of a wide range of existing rugby documents and plans, such as the Black Ferns Review (see "References" on page 48 for full list).

For more detail see "Appendix 2" on page 36

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY?

- Average of around 24,000 females playing annually across the last five years
- Females make up 17.5% of rugby's playing population
- There are 3% female Chairs across rugby Boards
- 9.3% of rugby coaches and 5.7% of referees are female
- 48.2% of volunteer administrators are female

As at July 2022

Brief context

The New Zealand rugby system has been developed over 150 years to what it is today. Women and girls' engagement in rugby beyond fans, supporters and generic volunteering really started around 30 years ago, with female players establishing a Black Ferns women's national team to compete internationally. The women and girls' game and engagement more broadly across rugby has grown incrementally since then. The following represents the current state and our foundation to measure change and impact.

In 2022, there were 24,447 women and girls registered and playing rugby in New Zealand and thousands of women volunteering in rugby across the country.

The top 10 aspects women and girls enjoy most about rugby

1. Playing
2. Team camaraderie and support
3. Being with friends and whānau
4. Attributes of rugby (physicality, aggression etc)
5. Fun
6. Community connection
7. The challenge, developing and improving
8. Meeting new people
9. Fitness
10. Competition, success or winning

- 87.5% of female players under 18 compared to 68% male players under 18
- 40% average annual retention of female players
- Females involved in the game enjoy it and score rugby enjoyment 8.6/10
- Current female participants have a high likelihood to recommend getting involved in rugby to their friends (Net Promoter Score +47)
- There are 24% female Board members across the rugby system (i.e., 57 women from 237 positions on Super Club and Provincial Union Boards)

As at July 2022

For more detail on the current state, see "Appendix 3" on page 37

WHAT CHANGES ARE NEEDED TO ENGAGE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY INTO THE FUTURE?

"Appendix 4" on page 38 outlines barriers, challenges and opportunities to increase engagement for women and girls, based on the input of those involved in our consultation. Here are some that give a feel for the starting point for this system strategy.

What do current participants say are the priorities for improvement?

"We are trying to encourage participation in a system that was never designed for us or our success. The modifications that have been made are piecemeal and disconnected."

"Countless (barriers), uniform, changing rooms, coaches and lack of female coaches, lack of formats appropriate to players, size and age of player. Most unions are only scratching the surface of the potential for young players."

"Old school attitudes towards women's rugby, bias and trying the same stuff over and over with bad results but not changing things... Not just trying what has been tried for the men's game and expecting it to work."

"Traditional Eurocentric mindsets that are outdated and do not meet the needs of current fans, players and women who want to be involved in the game. Starting from governance & other leadership positions."

The top 10 opportunities to get more W&G engaged in rugby

1. Innovative / flexible delivery approaches to enable girls-only rugby
2. Female skill coaching / technique development for confidence / injury prevention
3. Female-friendly participation Have-a-Go events, festivals or camps
4. Media, advertising and recruitment to target markets
5. Increase in general visibility, awareness and celebration of W&G rugby
6. Use of Black Ferns or local female rugby roles models to inspire
7. School-based promotion
8. Improved opportunities for school-aged girls
9. Welcoming and inclusive attitudes & supportive environments
- 10=Growth in participation for juniors
- 10=Clear and visible W&G pathways

The top 10 barriers for W&G engagement

1. Judgemental environments / attitudes
2. Lack of club / school support or understanding
3. Low participation numbers
4. Physicality and fear of injury from tackling
5. Lack of female-only teams and competitions
6. Lack of equity, respect or value for females
7. Limited team numbers or competition quality
8. Quality of coaching or development
9. Lack of inclusion (on-field and off-field)
10. Lack of opportunities to participate

WHY IS ENGAGING MORE WOMEN & GIRLS IN RUGBY IMPORTANT?

Women & girls (W&G) have been supporting and involved in rugby since its inception with the first women's game being played in the 1880s. Almost 100 years later the first national women's team was established for the Women's World Rugby Festival. They went on to play in the 1991 Rugby World Cup organising and funding everything themselves. Funding from NZRU began in 1994 and the national 15s team became the Black Ferns, who have gone on to win six Rugby World Cups, and the Black Ferns Sevens who have been World Champions six times and who have won both Olympic silver and gold medals.

In 2022, there were 24,447 women & girls registered and playing rugby in New Zealand and thousands of women volunteering in rugby across the country. This strategy presents an exciting opportunity to grow our game and connect further with our communities – **Rugby a Game for All.**

Background to the opportunity

Rugby comes from strong traditions and has been an institution in the hearts and minds of New Zealanders for 150 years. It has predominantly been perceived as a male's game, however 51% of New Zealanders are women and therefore represent a huge opportunity for growth across the game.

Rugby still maintains a strength of popularity based on cultural tradition, passion and loyalty; however it risks decline unless it can adapt to the changing face of Kiwi 'customers,' the shift in lifestyles and pressures, and the different ways people in New Zealand and around the world engage in and consume rugby. New Zealand is a melting pot of cultures, with 70% New Zealand European, 17% Māori, 8% Pacific Peoples, 15% Asian and 2% Middle Eastern, Latin American and African (MELAA).

Females can play a key part in the transformation of rugby. As one female participant summed it up:

"I think if NZR is genuinely wanting to co-design and craft a contemporary and courageous woman and girls' strategy, then I'm all for that. It needs direction, purpose, and bravery to focus on a few key things that will fuel a part of the nation's game where the fires have already been lit by girls and women participants themselves.

The women involved in high performance rugby are incredibly thoughtful about their place in the game and their role in encouraging its growth in all areas: junior, school, community / club, and elite level. Listen to them and weave their ideas into the NZR strategy for the future.

Park the paternalism for a moment and let the wāhine toa lead YOU. There are many women and girls involved in rugby who understand the interconnectedness of what is possible and are cognisant of their responsibilities in making this a game for everyone - not just a game that suits their own purposes and wants. There's the opportunity in the future strategy - that investment into, prioritisation of, and promotion of girls and women's rugby is used to feed into its own success."

Foundation for Change Journey

Data from the NZR-commissioned Ernst and Young report, "Women in Rugby Business Plan November 2020", reinforces that women & girls are one of rugby's largest growth markets and there is an identified commercial model. The report emphasises the growth opportunities around fan engagement, commercial investment, participation, and elite performance as a means to inspire New Zealanders and deliver against NZR's strategic plan.

The potential is significant. Females influence their children – what sport they play, what events they go to, and what they buy. Research indicates that females themselves make 80% of the purchasing decisions which is an opportunity for additional and new sponsorship dollars, event and merchandise spend. New Zealand has 51% females, and when you consider the 18% single parent families, and 85% female primary school teachers, you start to see why rugby can benefit from further engaging females and their spheres of influence.

Rugby is competing for 'a share of the sandshoe' with many other sports. Overlooking the female half of the market undermines rugby's ability to genuinely achieve participation growth in an increasingly competitive market. Added to this, rugby stakeholders throughout the strategy consultation highlighted the broader benefits they see for the overall rugby culture and environments when women are actively engaged in rugby communities.

Women and girls in rugby is already a priority for New Zealand Rugby, as outlined in the New Zealand Rugby's 2025 Strategy: **"Rugby is a game for all,** regardless of our backgrounds, beliefs or identity."

This was further confirmed through NZR's commitment to 2022 as the Year of Women & Girls. Engaging women & girls is also consistent with NZR's broader diversity and inclusion approach.

While there has been incremental progress, this ten-year strategy sets out the aligned system direction and priorities to drive forward and genuinely engage women & girls across all aspects of rugby. It also provides a line in the sand for the current state for the rugby system to monitor and reflect on its progress into the future.

Engaging more women & girls in rugby is a change process. There are many organisations that make up the New Zealand rugby system: from the national body New Zealand Rugby, the New Zealand Māori Rugby system, Pacific Advisory Group, Super Rugby Clubs, Provincial Unions, clubs, schools and kura, and other community organisations. Change to deliver equity for women and girls is a journey that will take time, focused effort, and a genuine desire by people and organisations across the rugby system to operate and behave differently over time.

"Change takes time, and it may take a decade, or even a generation, for women's sports to attain its full potential. But its promise of delivering value to sponsors, investors, fans, and athletes and teams themselves is becoming more and more clear."

This Women & Girls in Rugby System Strategy synthesises the New Zealand rugby system and stakeholders' collaborative response to strategically seize the exciting opportunity that women & girls in rugby represent.

The system strategy strives to deliver "equity" for women & girls in rugby across New Zealand.

'Equality' means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities regardless of their individual needs.

'Equity' recognises and strives to identify the specific requirements of an individual or group of people and provide the necessary resources or opportunities to meet those needs.



Key reasons for engaging women & girls in rugby

- Women and sport global focus - untapped commercial opportunity.
- Women make up 51% of the New Zealand population - untapped potential market growth opportunity.
- Women make 80% of the buying decisions – untapped potential spending and sponsorship.
- Research shows more diverse boards are linked to more successful organisational performance – untapped people and leadership potential.
- Rugby system stakeholders identified the positive impact on rugby culture and environments when women are present and actively engaged – untapped social and societal impact potential.

WHAT IS THE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY SYSTEM STRATEGY?

The Women & Girls in Rugby System Strategy is a set of guiding principles and a roadmap of focus areas and prioritised building blocks to deliver successful and sustainable engagement of women & girls (W&G) across the wider rugby community over a 10 year period. It is strongly aligned with the goals sought within the NZR 2025 Strategy and the pou outlined in the Māori Rugby Board Strategy, but contains measurable outcomes specific to women & girls.

As with any sport, the success of delivering on this strategy is absolutely reliant on the people working and volunteering across rugby:

**He tangata, he tangata, he tangata
(it is the people, it is the people, it is the people).**

Māori whakatuki (proverb)

How does this Strategy align to New Zealand Rugby and the New Zealand Māori Rugby Board?

This system strategy is underpinned by and aligns with the NZR Strategy 2025 and the New Zealand Māori Rugby Board Strategy. It aims to deliver against the vision, strategic pillars and pou identified within those two documents, with the level of evidence, guiding principles and a road map that ensures these outcomes can be achieved.

NZR’s vision is to unify and inspire through rugby, with four pillars and three enablers in place to achieve success. Each has a part to play in the development and support of women and girls in rugby. Similarly, the Māori Rugby Board have a vision to reimagine rugby to ensure positive outcomes for Māori. Through four pou (pillars) and five values, the Māori Rugby Board aim to enhance the experience for wāhine in the game.

For a detailed breakdown of the alignment between this system strategy, the NZR and Māori Rugby Board strategies see “Appendix 6” on page 46.

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are statements that provide the core reasons or behaviours that underpin thinking across the W&G system strategy. They can be treated like a decision-making guide to enable success along the change journey.

- 1** Underpinning and surrounding all that we do is the protection and integration of Te Ao Māori, a genuine ‘Waka Hourua’ partnering approach with New Zealand Māori Rugby Board, and the enabling of culturally inclusive ‘women & girls in rugby’ journey and environments.
- 2** Strategic choices and priorities made across the rugby system should always build towards the desired outcomes to engage more women & girls in rugby (rather than choosing ad hoc or short-term initiatives).
- 3** Take a ‘rugby for all’ view.
- 4** Take a women & girls participant-centred, needs-based view.
- 5** Be informed by women & girls’ voices, data, and insights.
- 6** Always consider safety and wellbeing of women & girls.
- 7** Consider holistic outcomes (e.g. participant experience, performance, pathways, marketing & brand, fan engagement, culture, wellbeing, enablers etc.)
- 8** Use a collaborative approach to work together across the rugby system with flexibility to make things happen for women & girls.
- 9** Be open to change, innovate, fail fast and try again.
- 10** Use a “listening for understanding” approach, with an emphasis on open communication.
- 11** Invest in what is needed most for women & girls, consider interdependencies, and be accountable for delivering on investment.
- 12** Focus on continuous learning and fact-based evaluation and adaptation.
- 13** Align to the nationally-shared direction, priorities and outcomes, but implement through regionally-led solutions that meet differing women & girls’ needs and populations across regions.

Five Integrated Focus Areas

The five strategy Focus Areas are interlinked and reliant on each other to drive sustainable outcomes success.

A	CULTURE	An open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby
B	SYSTEM	Focused rugby system, investment, roles, resourcing and accountability
C	PARTICIPATION	Women & girls participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility
D	PERFORMANCE	Balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for women and girls rugby – high performance, fan and commercial
E	TRANSITIONS	Women & Girls entry and retention in rugby through safe, supportive and confident transitions

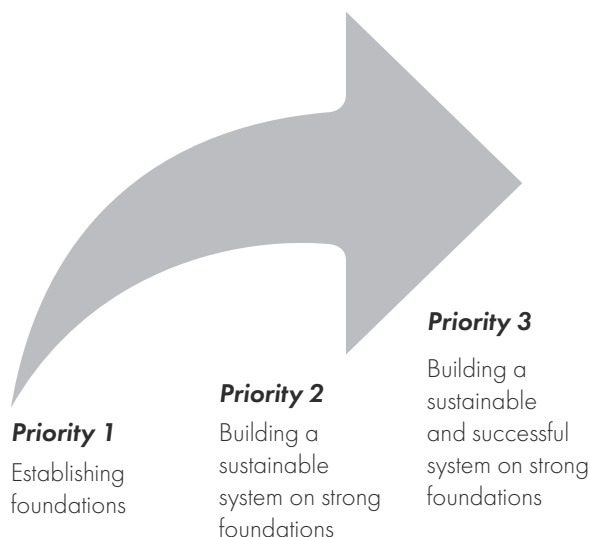
Provided across the following pages is an outline of each of the five Focus Areas, why they're important, the key outcomes being sought, and the prioritised building blocks to achieve success in each focus area. For each of the focus areas there are two or three key outcomes that serve to measure long-term success, and several other outcomes that allow progress to be assessed more deeply along the way.

Series of Prioritised Building Blocks

Each building block has a priority from 1-3. Although sequential, in practice the priorities do not need to be linear and the timing of each will change depending on the starting point of the organisations within the system, what they choose to prioritise, and the timing of investment into these initiatives.

There is no one way or single journey to achieve the desired W&G outcomes. The strategy acknowledges and respects that stakeholders across the rugby system are starting from different points, have different resources, and have different populations to consider.

While the priorities and outcomes can be found within each of the five Focus Areas, there is also a consolidated summary in "Appendix 1" on page 32.



Appendices

For background to the strategy, the Appendices detail:

- a consolidated summary of prioritised building blocks and outcomes
- how the system strategy was developed and who contributed to it
- a synthesis of rugby stakeholders' perceptions of the current state of the system for W&G as at July/August 2022 (provided through interviews, a survey and a series of regional workshops)
- a participants' view of what key changes are needed to remove barriers for W&G and capitalise on opportunities
- the specific current state data and stakeholder insights for each of the five focus areas
- the strategic alignment between this strategy and the key New Zealand Rugby and New Zealand Māori Rugby Board strategies
- a reference list of data and information sources reviewed and considered throughout the strategy development process

WOMEN & GIRLS IN RUGBY SYSTEM STRATEGY



PERFORMANCE NGĀ HUA

TE UPOKO - THE HEAD

Balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for Women & Girls rugby

- Mahinganui - high performance
- Kaitautoko - fan
- Tauhokohoko - commercial



TRANSITIONS NGĀ WHANAKETANGA

TE TAURA - THE CORD

Women & Girls entry and retention in rugby through safe, supportive and confident transitions



CULTURE AHUREA WHUTUPŌRO

TE AHO - THE TIE

Open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby



SYSTEM PŪNAHA WHUTUPŌRO

TE KAPUTA - THE STOPPER

Focused rugby system, investment, roles, resourcing and accountability



PARTICIPATION WHAI WĀHITANGA

TE HUKAHUKA - THE TASSELS

Women & girls participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility

ENVIRONMENT TAHUATANGA

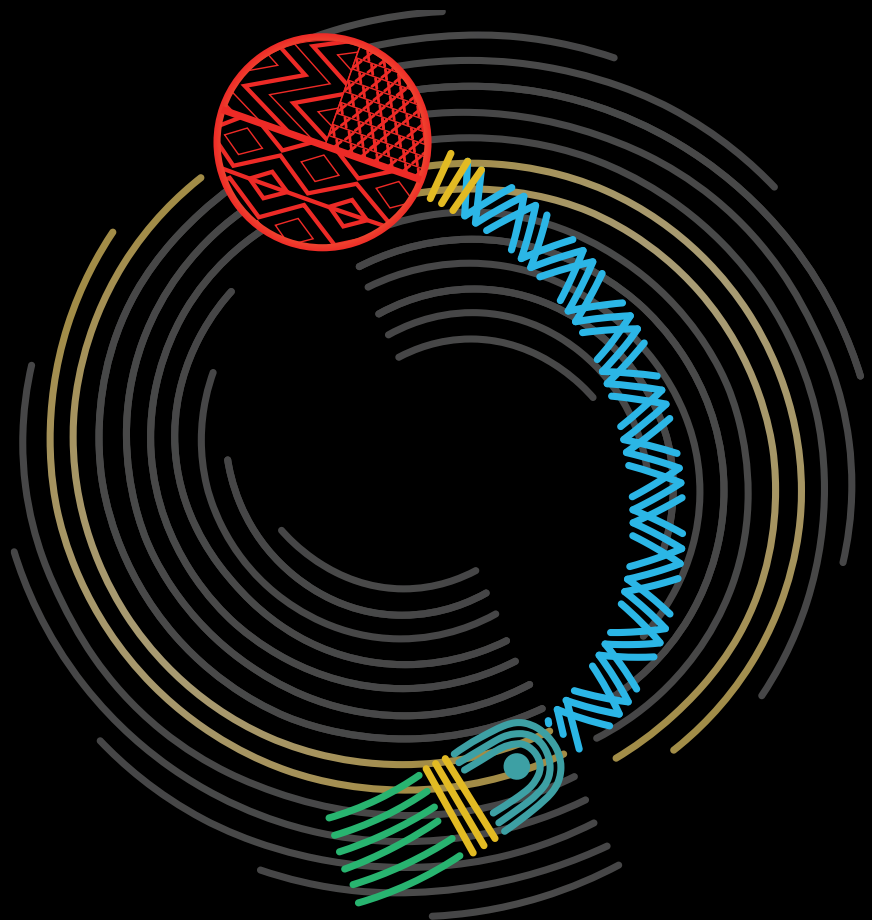
RUGBY FANS
PEOPLE VOLUNTEERING IN RUGBY
RUGBY PARTICIPANTS
RUGBY SUPPORTERS
PEOPLE WORKING IN RUGBY

Te Poi Tāniko

He tino taonga nō mai rā anō, nō ngā tipuna heke iho.
It is a treasure handed down from our ancestors

Te Poi Tāniko are a precious Māori taonga (treasure) from Aotearoa, an ancient practice handed down through the generations. Poi can mean the physical objects used by performers, the choreography itself or the accompanying music.

This Strategy, and its Focus Areas, takes inspiration from poi. We have combined various elements of poi, including the physical structure, the motion of poi and the metaphor of poi as a connector of communities past, present and future.



HOW CAN RUGBY ORGANISATIONS USE THIS STRATEGY?

This system strategy provides the 'why' and 'what,' along with the desired impacts and outcomes. Feedback on the current state in July / August 2022 shows that different organisations and people are at different places around engaging women and girls, which is normal and expected. This system strategy has been designed so all stakeholders can see where our rugby system wants to get to, and the key focus areas, building blocks, priorities, and guiding principles to get there. Some may be starting at the beginning, while others may already have some of the identified building blocks in place so can move quickly onto the later priorities.

While the strategy gives some examples for 'how,' based on ideas expressed by stakeholders through the strategy development process, the implementation of this strategy, or the 'how,' is in the hands of the people and organisations across the rugby system.

New Zealand Rugby, as a leader and enabler of the rugby system, will continue to communicate with the system the role it will play in accelerating, encouraging, and supporting the strategic change journey. Working together on this change management plan will be critical to ensuring the system can shift collaboratively and sustainably.

Each and every rugby organisation can start their own women and girls journey by considering which of the Priority 1 building blocks they already have in place across the five focus areas. The next step is to focus on enhancing and aligning those efforts while selecting a few other Priority 1 building blocks to implement that align with their wider organisational strategy and goals.

Knowledge and examples already exist across rugby and the wider sport sector around how to implement the various building blocks – a proactive and collaborative approach will support system-wide design, development and sharing of what can work best for women and girls in rugby.

As the needs of women and girls engaging in rugby naturally change over time, a level of implementation flexibility will be needed. However, it is important that organisations always keep an integrated view across the five strategic focus areas and the building block priorities, target all efforts to the outcomes being sought, and maintain approaches that align with the guiding principles.

CULTURE | AHUREA WHUTUPŌRO

An open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby | Ko te wairua mākohakoha, tāpiripiri hoki hei ahurea mō te whutupōro.

Culture is about recognising that 'rugby is for all' and women & girls should feel welcome, respected, included, and able to access rugby experiences and opportunities that meet their needs and wellbeing. It's very much a culture change journey for the rugby system, by increasing women in decision-making roles, and using female participant voices, insights, and data to drive a shift in attitudes, behaviours and perceptions. It is about ensuring the rugby system is inclusive and non-judgemental, and that opportunities and journeys for women & girls through rugby are visible and accessible.

More than a quarter of current participants indicate the biggest barrier making it difficult for women and girls to engage in rugby is the judgemental environment and culture. Followed by the lack of club/school support or understanding. Also in the top 10 barriers were lack of equity, respect or value for females and lack of inclusion (on and off the field).

"The rugby culture is not suited to everyone, and the culture is mainly adopted from men's rugby teams which may not suit majority or women in general."

"It can be a bit of a boys club, sometimes your opinion is not as valued by men in a rugby situation although I am experienced and good at my job."

You can find more participant quotes about the current state of rugby culture in "Culture current state" on page 39

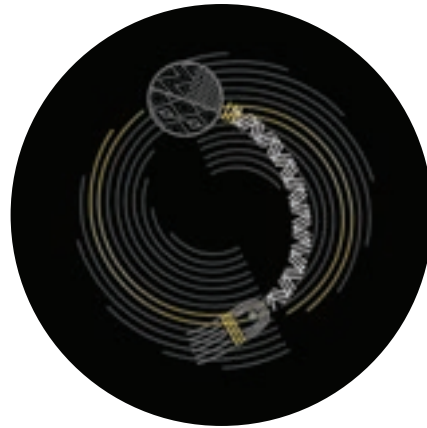


Prioritised Building Blocks

The following table outlines the building blocks for establishing an open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby. These are grouped in priority order across ten years.

It is recommended organisations consider which Culture building blocks they already have in place, to help them choose the highest priority ones to focus on to strengthen their Culture.

The Culture building blocks will deliver an open-minded and inclusive rugby culture across the system, contributing to the sustainability and success of women's rugby at every level.



Culture Priority 1	Culture Priority 2	Culture Priority 3
A1.1 Share W&G data & information across the rugby system.	A2.1 Collaborate on a shift and alignment of W&G branding that engages and connects W&G in rugby.	A3.1 Improve training and support for Chairs to better facilitate diverse Boards and Committees.
A1.2 Enforce baseline member protection standards to keep W&G safe in all rugby environments.	A2.2 Use storytelling to raise visibility around diverse W&G journeys in rugby.	A3.2 Address negative sideline behaviour and drive positive and inclusive attitudes and behaviours towards W&G throughout rugby environments.
A1.3 Use quotas throughout the rugby system to drive significant increase in numbers and inclusion of diverse women in governance .	A2.3 Facilitate governance training and resources that lift the quality of rugby governance.	A3.3 Enable new systems and technology to source and share women and girls' voices, data and insights
A1.4 Support male champions to advocate and enable improved engagement of W&G.	A2.4 Source and share data and insights on the needs of future/potential W&G participants.	
A1.5 Enable unconscious bias training to raise awareness and shift mindsets.	A2.5 Understand and enhance the positive impacts of Māori and Pacific Peoples' cultural practices on inclusion and engagement of W&G in rugby.	
A1.6 Establish W&G advisory groups so W&G have a collaborative voice in guiding female-centric rugby outcomes at all levels.		
A1.7 Support development and pathways for diverse female leaders across rugby.		

Outcomes

These are the outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the Culture focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- At least 40% women in governance across rugby organisations (i.e. NZR, NZMRB, Super, PU, Clubs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 40% women in leadership across the rugby system (including rugby community and high performance roles)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Rugby branded as 'a game for all' (with a measurable shift in public and rugby system perception)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- W&G data and insights are consistently available to inform the rugby system and support quality decision making
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 100% of rugby organisations obtain and use W&G data & insights to inform their decision-making
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- NZR and 100% of PUs (and other organisations across the rugby system) have women and girls advisory groups so female voices are at the centre of decision making for W&G rugby
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 100% of PUs meet 'minimum' member safeguarding requirements

Why?

A traditionally male-dominated game is understandably less likely to automatically deliver experiences that are fit-for-purpose for females. There are many biases across the rugby system and in the people operating within it, often unconscious and unintentional. Changing the culture of rugby requires people and organisations that are aware of the need for change and have a desire to do something about it, to position rugby to more effectively engage with the 51% of the New Zealand population who are females.

Understanding and wanting to make change is not enough. Research shows there are many men across the rugby system who do want to make change, but simply want to know how. They often lack the knowledge and tools for success, and the rugby system more generally lacks the quantum of females to provide much-needed insights.

There are many women & girls who love rugby, but a large number reflect on the negative judgements or stereotypes placed on them if they choose to get involved in what's traditionally been seen as a "man's game". These closed-minded, judgemental behaviours and attitudes across rugby are a definite barrier to the enjoyment and wellbeing of those currently involved, as well as a barrier to engage more women & girls in future.

Rugby already has a high proportion of Māori and Pacific Peoples playing and involved in the game, so engagement at this level is already taking place. Better understanding of rugby's ethnically-supportive behaviours and practices for Māori and Pacific Peoples will enhance outcomes for W&G from these ethnicities, as well as developing a culture that equally engages the many other ethnicities across our diverse nation.

Addressing these issues requires a culture shift across rugby over time. There are largely untapped opportunities for rugby to engage women in decision-making across the game to broaden perspectives and enhance thinking for better quality rugby governance, management, and operational outcomes. As Burton (2015) indicates:

"Cultural change and gender equity in sport point to the importance of women gaining access to, and influence within, power structures, especially through occupying leadership and decision making positions."

Impacts

A description of the proposed impacts of the shift in the Culture focus area are summarised below:

Female governors and leaders operate in unbiased systems

- Quotas drive competition and progress to build the numbers of females in governance on Boards and sub-committees across the rugby system.
- Unbiased systems, unrestrictive constitutions, development opportunities, clear pathways, genuine opportunities, and support are in place, so females are genuine contributors in decision-making roles across the rugby system.
- Training enables and supports Chairs to better facilitate the inclusion of women and the diverse thinking around rugby Boards and Committees. Broader governance training means the overall quality of governance across rugby is improving.
- W&G data and information from within and outside of rugby is easily accessible, shared and consistently used to inform decision-making, investment, resourcing and approaches. Best practices are shared enabling quality W&G outcomes without reinventing the wheel.
- Research into the needs of W&G not currently engaged in rugby (as players or in other roles) enables the rugby system to understand and capitalise on potential W&G markets and opportunities.

Rugby environments are welcoming for W&G

- Rugby environments and people comply with baseline member protection standards, so that women and girls' safety and wellbeing is assured.
- Rugby environments are more welcoming to W&G with people's biases understood and behaviours improved.
- Rugby experiences are catering to the holistic needs of diverse W&G, leading to more W&G engaging and retained in the sport.
- Collaborative shift in branding means more W&G are attracted to engage in 'rugby for all' without fear of judgement or negative stereotypes. Brand clarity, capitalising on the unique selling points for W&G rugby, allows females to identify and belong to community rugby organisations that offer W&G opportunities.
- W&G advisory groups enable females to have a positive and constructive voice to guide and support the direction and progress around W&G rugby offerings.
- Storytelling shares the journeys of female leaders and role models across rugby, providing the visibility and connection that welcomes genuine diversity of involvement and making it more accessible for W&G.

Males championing women and girls in rugby

- Accessible advice and resources are helping male champions of change to enable and support W&G outcomes. 'Male champions' and 'allies' across rugby are celebrated and utilised (e.g. Allies of gender equity in Aotearoa sport)
- Training and tools that help boys & men (as well as women & girls) recognise and address unconscious biases are reducing unwelcoming behaviours towards women & girls across rugby.

Whānau, parents and guardians support 'rugby for all'

- Sideline behaviour (e.g. Applaud) and other initiatives across rugby environments continue to highlight and stamp out negative and judgemental behaviours towards women and girls' and others.
- Perceptions and experience of rugby is shifting towards 'rugby for all' and increasing positive parental interest and engagement.

Implementation ideas

How Culture might look in action

- Think visual storytelling that raises the visibility of all types of females in engaged in different roles across rugby.
- Think practical governance tools (e.g. constitution template, skills matrix, role adverts, promotion channels, induction process).
- Think short and humorous 'how to videos' to help people in rugby understand how their behaviours land with others, and practical approaches to being more inclusive.
- Think Governance 101 training so all Board/Committee members better understand their role and responsibilities and how to govern rugby effectively as a diverse group of capable people.
- Think Women's advisory groups making decisions for regional W&G rugby delivery that meets the different needs of W&G players and ensuring they have equitable access to grounds, facilities, coaching and referees.
- Think W&G information-sharing through cross-region meetings, shared learning Zoom sessions, and collaboratively-designed resources (e.g. Women in rugby clubs toolkit).
- Think non-judgemental 'rugby for all' marketing campaigns that acknowledge and attract people from any background and walk of life (e.g. "girls can", "bring your whole self to rugby", "gay is okay", "pass the ball to all", "mana through rugby", "don't judge me, judge my skills", "big or small, you'll have the ball" etc).

SYSTEM | PŪNAHA WHUTUPŌRO

Focused rugby system collaboration, investment, roles, resourcing and accountability | Ka aronuitia ngā pūnaha whutupōro ki te mahi ngātahi, te pūtea penapena, ngā tūranga, ngā rauemi me te haepapatanga.

The system includes NZR, the Māori Rugby System, Super Clubs, Provincial Unions (PUs), clubs, schools and kura, and other current and future community delivery partners.

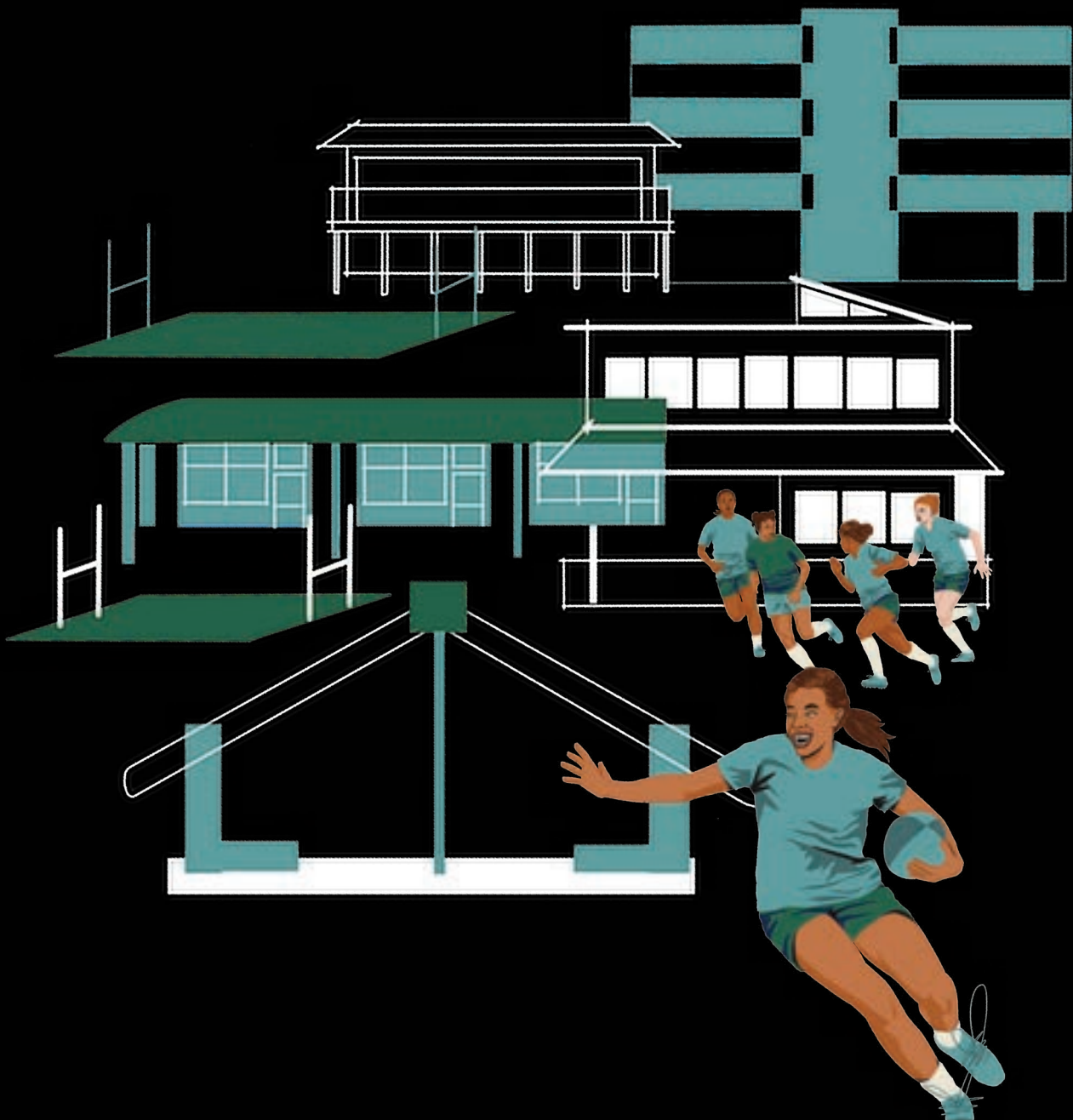
NZR are the kaitiaki of the game New Zealanders love. The rugby system looks to NZR to take an intentional leadership role, build trust, and promote collaboration and accountability across the system for successful outcomes for the whole of rugby.

“Lack of direction or strategy from NZR has meant a lack of clarity around shared priorities, plans, roles, investment and accountability across the rugby system and a lack of ‘how’ to strategically grow women and girls’ rugby.”

“Reviews and reports have been confronting and created a lot of emotion. Despite good intentions, at this stage the perception is that not a lot of progress is being made.”

“Men’s rugby has grown and built up from foundations over 150 years. NZR is building the women & girls rugby system top-down, bottom-up to replicate the men’s set up without catering realistically for the current scale and growth of the women’s game.”

You can find more participant quotes about the current state of the rugby system in “System current state” on page 41

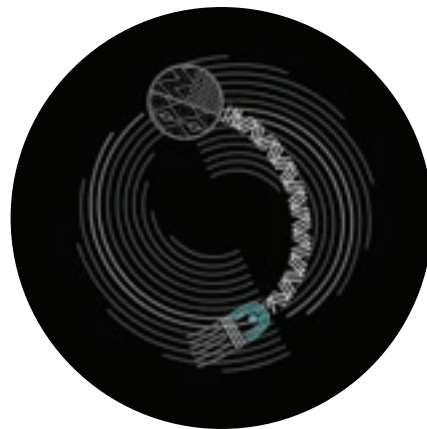


Prioritised Building Blocks

The following table outlines the building blocks for developing focused rugby system collaboration, investment, roles, resourcing and accountability. These are grouped in priority order across ten years.

It is recommended organisations consider which System building blocks they already have in place, to help them choose the highest priority ones to focus on to strengthen their System.

The System building blocks will deliver the necessary outcomes to create focused rugby system collaboration on investment, roles, resourcing and accountability, contributing to the sustainability and success of women's rugby at every level.



System Priority 1	System Priority 2	System Priority 3
B1.1 Demonstrate intentional leadership of W&G rugby nationally and regionally.	B2.1 Implement minimum requirements for W&G community rugby.	B3.1 Enable community rugby through technology resources and support.
B1.2 Redefine rugby system relationships, roles, and responsibilities for W&G.	B2.2 Enhance rugby system partnering, investment & accountability for mutually beneficial W&G outcomes.	B3.2 Attract, recruit, retain and develop high quality women into roles across the rugby system.
B1.3 Collaboratively market W&G Community Rugby opportunities.	B2.3 Implement a risk reward approach to motivate delivery against W&G targets.	B3.3 Review progress against W&G strategy and implementation outcomes and update priorities and targets.
B1.4 Identify W&G local community rugby needs and minimum standards (i.e. Club Review).	B2.4 Upskill and empower community rugby people to deliver inclusive and engaging community rugby.	
	B2.5 Review progress against W&G strategy and implementation outcomes and update priorities and targets.	

Outcomes

These are the outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the System focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of rugby system partnership, investment and resourcing delivering positive W&G outcome shifts year on year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is clear ownership and accountability for W&G, from community to professional, across the rugby system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of organisations are consistently meeting minimum standards for W&G community rugby across the system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All regions have visible and well-delivered W&G community rugby
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PUs are funded and delivering W&G outcomes in line with mutually agreed key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rugby consistently attracts high quality candidates and is seen as a great place to build a career
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - W&G rugby is self-funding and financially sustainable for NZR and PUs

Why?

The System comprises all the entities contributing to rugby from community through to international. This includes NZR, Super Clubs, Hubs, Provincial Unions, clubs, schools and kura, the Māori Rugby System, regional rugby councils and committees, and other community partners.

Provincial Unions are the key conduit between NZR and community rugby organisations in each region and lead the community, provincial and developmental rugby environments. They are in some part funded by NZR, however operate independently and deliver outcomes specific to their region.

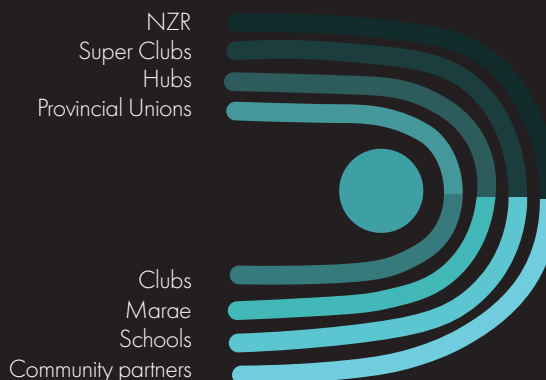
The entire system is collectively responsible for leadership, investment, enablement and delivery of the W&G rugby strategy. Many rugby system partners are supported, funded and enabled by New Zealand Rugby and all its internal departments.

Given the unique aspects of the women's game and women's engagement in rugby, the system that supports it needs to be fit for purpose. This requires a re-think as to rugby system roles and responsibilities in relation to W&G, and it requires a participant-centered approach. It also requires rugby organisations across the system to collaboratively develop and implement W&G operational plans and actions.

The System

The System comprises all the entities contributing to women and girls rugby, from community through to international.

The whole system is collectively responsible for the Women and Girls in Rugby System Strategy. Working collectively, we can make **Rugby a Game for All**.



Impacts

A description of the proposed impacts of the shift in the System focus area are summarised below:

Intentional W&G system leadership

- Intentional leadership of W&G rugby is demonstrated by NZR, Super Clubs, and Provincial Unions to drive outcomes for W&G and gives clarity and direction to all those involved across the system.
- NZR and NZMRB work together to champion the strategy and to align dedicated resourcing for W&G, providing visible leadership and intention to the system.
- Decisions and direction of the game at all levels considers impact on all genders and collaboratively delivers on the guiding principle of 'rugby for all'.
- W&G Strategy review in 2026 and 2029 assesses progress against the 10 year strategy.
- Implementation planning put in place, then reviewed and updated in 2027 and 2031 ensuring ongoing alignment between the strategy and the needs of W&G and the rugby system.

Organisational roles and responsibilities clarified

- Definition and clarity of relationships, roles, and responsibilities in relation to W&G rugby across all delivery environments.
- Defined NZR departmental roles and responsibilities across and into the system (including Corporate, People Safety & Wellbeing, Community, Communications, Branding, Commercial, Technology, High Performance and Finance) creating cohesiveness and collaboration for W&G into and across rugby.
- Collaborative marketing of W&G Community Rugby is raising the visibility of W&G opportunities.

Partnering and accountability for shared W&G outcomes

- Partnering across delivery providers in each region is delivering mutually beneficial W&G outcomes and is supporting achievement of W&G targets.
- Targeted and accountable investment into and across the rugby system is delivering outcomes for W&G that are aligned to the strategy.
- Risk and reward approach to investment that supports achievement of targets (e.g. Strategic Alignment Funding (SAF)) is building good practice behaviours across the system that validate investment into W&G rugby.
- Beneficial financial outcomes are supporting the sustainability of W&G rugby.

High-quality women recruited and supported in rugby

- Targeted recruitment of women into roles across rugby, including leadership roles and influential decision-making roles.
- NZR and PUs are advocating and enabling the delivery of programmes that support leadership pathways for W&G in NZR and across the rugby system, providing clarity of the pathways to leadership and supportive environments for W&G.
- Visible pathways, support and developmental opportunities for women are seeing them progress through rugby in all roles, as coaches, referees, managers, administrators, governors etc.

W&G community rugby system is enabled for successful delivery

- Minimum requirements for successful W&G community rugby outcomes have been developed and implemented throughout the system.
- Quality training and development of community rugby people is building capability within W&G rugby.
- Technology is enabling community rugby and supporting the growth and delivery of the women and girls' game.

Implementation ideas

How the System might look in action

- Think leaders across rugby "walking the talk" on their commitments to engage W&G in rugby.
- Think focused W&G investment being used to deliver on sustainable W&G shifts.
- Think annual MOU between PUs and identified clubs / schools outlining who's doing what for W&G rugby delivery.
- Think 'great work stories' shared to attract women into rugby organisations.
- Think online digital marketing training to upskill clubs and PUs on content development.
- Think technology resource kits for clubs ('How to').
- Think marketing initiatives that promote attendance at community, club and provincial rugby.
- Think communications tools and platforms for PUs, clubs, schools and kura, the Māori rugby system, and community organisations, to interact easily and effectively.

PARTICIPATION | WHAI WĀHITANGA

W&G participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility | Mā te tirohanga auaha, ngāwari anō hoki e whakatītina ai ngā huarahi whai wāhitanga mō ngā wāhine / kōtiro.

Participation is about being female player-centred and responding to women & girls' feedback, data and insights to increase player participation through fun, safe, girls-only rugby experiences. It's about testing different delivery approaches for women and girls rugby, through innovative, locally-led, delivery partnerships and hybrid women and girls offerings, to build sustainable growth and success, in rugby.

26,551 players in 2021

90% growth over the past 11 years

"Senior club rugby is fragile in most places with few teams, low club loyalty, and a wide range of ages and experiences in team creates coaching, safety and social challenges."

"There is confusion around the right structure of game, right versions, right competitions, and the right calendar to create sustainability across the ecosystem."

"Population base in smaller areas is a challenge to develop sustainable 15s girls-only rugby teams and comps."

You can find more participant quotes about the current state of rugby participation in "Participation current state" on page 42



Prioritised Building Blocks

The following table outlines the building blocks for establishing women & girls participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility. These are grouped in priority order across ten years.

It is recommended organisations consider which Participation building blocks they already have in place, to help then choose the highest priority ones to focus on to strengthen their Participation.

The Participation building blocks will deliver women & girls participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility, contributing to the sustainability and success of women's rugby at every level.



Participation Priority 1

- C1.1 Shift to **PU-led W&G community rugby model** with roles & responsibilities between regional and local delivery partners collaboratively agreed to drive quality experiences and increased participation for W&G in each region.
- C1.2 Deliver athlete skill-build and injury prevention programmes for **safe and confident entry or transition into tackle rugby** for 11-18+ year olds.
- C1.3 Increase **girls-only non-contact offerings (e.g. Rip) for 11-12 year olds** that fit player numbers.
- C1.4 Increase **mixed or girls-only tackle offerings for 11-12 year olds** that consider adolescence factors and fit player numbers.
- C1.5 Increase **girls-only non-contact offerings (i.e. Rip) for 13-15 year olds** to lengthen non-contact pathway and provide entry option for new players.

Participation Priority 2

- C2.1 Increase **girls-only tackle offerings for 13-18 year olds** using formats (e.g. 7s, 10s, 15s) appropriate to player numbers and to building pathways, consolidated delivery as needed for safe quality experiences, and scheduling to avoid other sport clashes.
- C2.2 Increase **age-based girls-only festivals or have-a-go days for 11-15 year olds** to connect and engage girls in rugby.
- C2.3 Increase **girls-only festivals or camps for 15-18+ year olds** to connect and engage females of different cultures and/or capabilities to support retention and pathway transitions.
- C2.4 Investigate **regional or local partnerships with other sports** to grow and enhance W&G rugby participation in innovative ways.

Participation Priority 3

- C3.1 Extend the **non-contact offerings pathway (i.e. Rip) for 16-18 year olds** using girls-only and/or mixed for a quality experience that supports retention.
- C3.2 Increase **skills-based girls-only tournaments or festivals** to enhance tackle pathway and talent identification opportunities (7s, 10s, 15s).
- C3.3 Increase **girls-only non-contact offerings (e.g. Rippa) for Under 10 year olds** to provide an alternative to mixed Rippa teams and/or competitions to fit player numbers.
- C3.4 Retain and grow **adult female numbers** and provide quality W&G rugby experiences that support sustainable senior club participation.

Outcomes

These are the suggested outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the Participation focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

- PU, junior clubs, schools, the Māori rugby system and other community partners are effectively collaborating in each region to deliver quality rugby experiences for all W&G
- Rugby formats meet the needs of current and future players
- **Measurable year on year increase in girls-only offerings at all stages along the pathway**
- **Measurable year on year increase in participant satisfaction with quality of W&G rugby experiences**
- Clarity of "what my rugby looks like" at every age/ stage for every player in every region (the player pathways)
- **W&G player numbers are growing year on year at an average rate of 2,500 players/year (to 50,000 at 2033)**

Why?

Women & Girls' (W&G) participation pathways have unique elements and differing needs with respect to when and how girls enter (and re-enter) the game, the format they want to engage in, and the skill development they require to safely play and thrive in the game. The small numbers of female participants exacerbate the challenges in delivering safe W&G rugby and positive experiences.

This needs the rugby system to be open to change and to delivering women and girls' rugby differently to men & boys' rugby. One of the opportunities identified by the wider rugby ecosystem is the need for innovative and flexible delivery options to ultimately enable girls-only rugby at all ages.

At present, the offerings for W&G nationally are wide-ranging, very reliant on player numbers, and on the focus, commitment, and resources that are made available in each region. The current delivery model sees a player's typical journey go from junior club to school to senior club with no overarching accountability for the player's connection to the game, their safety and their experiences. This has resulted in very poor retention of W&G players which exacerbates the challenge of delivering sustainable opportunities or pathways. It has also resulted in players shifting teams, uneven competitions, and poor quality or unsafe rugby experiences.

The Participation focus area addresses the immediate need for an overarching national W&G pathway that is participant-centred, flexible, and can be regionally built and adapted to meet the numbers and needs of local female participants over time. This requires organisations working together across the rugby system with flexible but aligned actions to use a different approach for W&G.

The overriding emphasis of the Participation focus area is to be flexible and innovative around collaborative delivery of W&G rugby in each region to continually increase girls-only offerings and grow numbers in both contact and non-contact formats.

Impacts

A description of the proposed impacts of the shift in the Participation focus area are summarised below:

Redefined W&G delivery model and delivery partners

- Shift in mindsets and willingness to innovate is changing how and by whom rugby is delivered to effectively cater for W&G numbers growth and experience quality across rugby's diverse regions (e.g. junior clubs operating in the teenage space to maintain player continuity and relationships or cater for girls whose schools are focused primarily on the elite team).
- Provincial Unions are taking collaborative, rather than competitive, approaches with delivery organisations in each region using a 'can do' participant-centred focus and outside-the-box thinking that is supporting more girls to play rugby (e.g. hybrid team make-ups with flexible player-organisation connections where single organisations don't have sufficient numbers, or community partnering to enable quality W&G grounds provision and coaching support).

Creation of innovative and flexible W&G offerings

- Increased provision of girls-only offerings through flexible, player-centred approaches that consolidate numbers and skill-levels (e.g. centralised delivery or hybrid club/school, school/school competitions).
- Delivery of skill development programmes is giving new and experienced players the competence and confidence to enjoy safe transitions into playing and succeeding in rugby without injury (refer to Transitions Focus Area).
- Different rugby formats and opportunities offered at different times across a season and scheduled collaboratively are enabling girls to participate in rugby alongside other sports (e.g. Balance is Better).
- Offerings and playing opportunities are enabling women & girls to enter and re-enter rugby as suits their changing needs (e.g. clear aspirational pathways in non-contact, 7s and 15s; teenage player retention in community/senior rugby; supporting W&G to step away at different life stages and feel welcomed back and supported into well-communicated W&G rugby opportunities and pathways when they're ready).
- Girls-only festivals and 'have a go' days are enabling girls to sample and experience the enjoyment and camaraderie of rugby in a safe environment without judgement (e.g. by age-group, ethnicity, capability level, geographical area).

Attraction and growth of W&G numbers based on participant needs

- W&G voices, data and insights are informing the design and delivery of W&G offerings, so they are meeting changing needs.
- The rugby system's priority focus on building quality, girls-only, contact and non-contact rugby participation opportunities and pathways for 11-18 year olds is increasing numbers and retention.
- Have-a-go and festival approaches are effectively connecting W&G of similar ages or capabilities to initially grow numbers and increase retention in low population areas or where there are no other girls-only offerings.
- Provision of non-contact rugby pathways beyond junior grades alongside the delivery of modified versions of tackle-rugby based on player numbers (e.g. 7s, 10s, 12s or 15s) is improving the experiences and pathway for W&G.
- Rugby skill-development tournaments and camps are developing the capability and confidence of W&G, and identifying and fostering talent (e.g. wāhine camps, talent camps).
- Marketing and promotion through schools and communities is increasing the visibility of where, what and when girls can play rugby in every region (refer to System Focus Area).

Implementation ideas

How Participation might look in action

- Think promotion of the variations of the game in every region to increase visibility of where and what W&G can play in that region at that time.
- Think marketing and promotion using a variety of rugby player personas to show rugby for all shapes and sizes.
- Think girls-only offerings at a centralised location to provide the best rugby experience for the numbers of girls available.
- Think rugby camps for teenage girls to provide age-based, experience-based or culturally-based opportunities to connect and develop skills together.
- Think flexible entry level 7s, 10s and 12s formats for intermediate and high school age girls to cater for available numbers.
- Think local Heartland or Farah Palmer Cup (FPC) players or Black Ferns personalities going into schools and clubs to promote W&G rugby offerings in that region.
- Think story-telling around the amazing playing and skill development initiatives that are happening regionally.
- Think local girls-only non-contact "oval ball" festivals in partnership with Touch or Tag Rugby.
- Think "snackable options" for W&G to engage in quality girls-only rugby experiences.

PERFORMANCE | NGĀ HUA

Balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for Women & Girls rugby – high-performance, fan and commercial | Kia tika, kia toitū ngā hua mō te whutupōro wāhine / kōtiro - e hāngai ana tēnei whainga ki ngā kaitākaro, ngā kaitautoko me te umanga.

Performance is about building performance pathways for women and girls that are sustainable, support fan growth and retention, are commercially attractive, and aligned to community rugby. To deliver balanced outcomes it is essential that the elements of Performance and high performance, fan engagement and commercial drivers are considered together and acknowledged as being interdependent and inseparable.

A number of current delivery partners, including the Super Clubs, Provincial Unions, and senior clubs, provide opportunities to develop and foster the aspirations and wellbeing of female players, coaches, and officials. The connection points between entities and the positive functional working relationships between the people within them are key to the delivery of successful outcomes along the performance pathway and through to the Black Ferns environments.

“NZR and PUs undervalue the commercial attractiveness of most things related to women in rugby. Often the women’s side is low-balled or sold as a ‘package’ with men’s rugby.”

“There is frustration at the lack of clear and sustainable pathways for Heartland Union players.”

“All Blacks are the brand for rugby at NZR. The Black Ferns are a link deeper in the website, and they don’t have their own presence which unconsciously reduces the value and profile of women in rugby.”

You can find more participant quotes about the current state of performance in rugby in “Performance current state” on page 43



Prioritised Building Blocks

The following table outlines the building blocks for establishing balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for W&G rugby – high performance, fan and commercial. These are grouped in priority order across ten years.

It is recommended organisations consider which Performance building blocks they already have in place, to help then choose the highest priority ones to focus on to strengthen their Performance.

The Performance priorities will deliver balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for W&G rugby across high-performance, fan and commercial, contributing to the sustainability and success of women’s rugby at every level.



Performance Priority 1	Performance Priority 2	Performance Priority 3
D1.1 Review and develop a planned approach to W&G competitions, performance and high performance pathways (e.g. Women’s High Performance Plan).	D2.1 Implement seamless pathway connections and transitions from community to performance (e.g. Women’s High Performance & Talent ID Plan implementation).	D3.1 Implement more strategically balanced W&G competitions , and performance and high performance pathways (i.e. High performance, commercial and fan).
D1.2 Review and develop a planned approach to W&G talent identification, development and support for players, coaches, referees, and managers (e.g. Women’s Talent ID Plan).	D2.2 Collaboratively drive cross-regional performance opportunities to foster female performance aspirations (e.g. Heartland, FPC).	D3.2 Further develop W&G high performance opportunities and environments to enhance W&G ability to win with mana.
D1.3 Redefine the Performance and High Performance delivery partners relationships, roles, and responsibilities for W&G.	D2.3 Review and instigate a shift to optimise the balance of W&G outcomes across high performance, fan and commercial needs.	D3.3 Optimise the W&G playing calendar .
D1.4 Source and share W&G commercial insights .		
D1.5 Source and share W&G fan engagement & brand insights .		

Outcomes

These are the suggested outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the Performance focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

– Sustained and improving performance results by Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens are attracting measurable increases in fans and growth of commercial investment
– Black Ferns teams have a well-established stand-alone sponsorship family delivering local and global opportunities
– Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens consistently winning pinnacle events
– Athlete wellbeing ratings meeting targets established in high performance plans (as identified initially in the 2023 high performance plan)
– Measurable growth in crowd attendance at regional competitions (e.g. FPC and Super Rugby Aupiki)
– Measurable growth in viewer numbers of regional competitions (e.g. FPC and Super Rugby Aupiki)
– Measurable growth and retention of quality W&G performance coaches and referees
– Measurable year on year growth and depth in the talent pool for Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens selection

“Further, women’s teams should capitalise on the additional flexibility they have on building digital presence and relationships with fans. They are in a position to negotiate contracts that are not as restrictive as for many of the men’s teams. Women’s teams can build a 1:1 relationship with fans via social media and streaming platforms that may be harder for men’s teams, whose primary fan interaction is via broadcast TV.”

Why?

The system has historically looked at women & girls talent development and high performance separately from fan engagement and commercial outcomes. The opportunity to integrate all three into the planning process recognises the interdependencies within these areas and ensures well-connected plans, priorities and balanced outcomes that contribute to the sustainability of women & girls’ rugby.

The Performance focus area recognises the key role Provincial Unions play in this space as the connector from the community, and the opportunity for cross-PU activities to strengthen performance offerings and foster female performance aspirations.

Establishing and enhancing communication channels between community, performance and high performance spaces is key to ensure the rugby system is connected and delivering sustainable and successful performance outcomes for W&G rugby.

Due to relatively low adult player numbers, younger athletes are often rushed through the pathways. This has proven detrimental to their overall wellbeing and has led to under-prepared athletes entering part/full time professional environments. Having a planned and clear approach to talent identification and development will support the transition of players along pathways and will ensure those reaching high performance environments are well-prepared and primed to succeed.

A clear pathway for W&G is needed, from school, through development, to high performance, to ensure the larger player numbers in the youth space are given clarity around their options and visibility of pathways, both for those aspiring to high performance and for those wanting to enjoy ongoing community participation (e.g. senior rugby). W&G pathway visibility will ensure attraction and retention of current and potential female players in the game.

Fan engagement requires a solid understanding of who the fan base is and what their drivers are. This starts by gathering insights and data to guide planning, communications, and activations. Fans, much like volunteers, are the backbone of sport and their engagement, growth and retention are vital to the sustainability and success of sport. Fans are also a big contributor to the commercial success of sport. Rugby has the opportunity to achieve this commercial success by developing a clear understanding of fan needs, personalising messaging, and supporting loyalty across the various W&G performance and high performance rugby products.

The commercial potential for women’s sport has been well documented globally and is poised for considerable growth over the coming decade. The challenge is to consistently attract substantial TV, digital and stadium audiences, so the value to sponsors becomes self-evident, which in turn should raise marketing spend and awareness.

The creation of the Aupiki teams inside existing and successful Super Clubs provided instant brand recognition and in some cases access to facilities and resources. The unique selling points of W&G rugby lends itself to standing apart with its own identity and brand when it comes to negotiating sponsorships and TV rights, driving its own value separate to the men's brands.

Women have significant buying power and therefore represent an appealing opportunity for sponsors. Given the relative fledging state of women's rugby in NZ, compared to men's rugby, this may enhance the ability to define W&G sponsor relationships:

Commercial success for W&G rugby includes understanding commercial opportunities, strong fan engagement, calendar optimisation, maximising the unique values of the Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens brand, and performance and high performance pathways and opportunities that achieve "winning with mana".

Impacts

A description of the proposed impacts of the shift in the Performance focus area are summarised below:

Strong W&G performance pathways and competitions

- Cross Provincial Union opportunities foster female performance aspirations (e.g. age-group cluster tournaments, Heartland and FPC competitions).
- Competitions and performance and high performance pathways are collaboratively reviewed by the system (e.g. Women's High Performance Plan) and are strengthening and catering for competitive and sustainable senior club rugby, performance and high performance opportunities.
- The system commitment to stronger connections between delivery providers is enabling effective transitions for W&G players from community to performance (15s and 7s).

Resilient and confident female performance-level players

- Female athletes are systematically and effectively identified, developed and supported to perform at higher levels (e.g. Women's Talent ID Plan).
- Female athlete wellbeing is prioritised across all transitions, from preparing to enter semi-professional rugby through to retirement.
- Female athletes understand professional rugby expectations and have the resilience to manage the steps up the performance pathway.

Quality performance-level coaches, officials, and managers

- Coaches, officials, and managers of W&G rugby are systematically and effectively identified, developed and supported to perform at higher levels (e.g. Women's HP and Talent ID Plans and NZR Coaching Review 2022).
- There are integrated coach and referee pathways from community to performance to high performance (refer to Transitions).

Loyal and happy fans of the women's game

- Fan engagement insights and data are sourced and shared to inform the investment and development of fan-based initiatives that meet fan needs and support loyalty.

Commercial success delivering sustainability for W&G

- Insights and data are sourced and shared to inform successful commercial plans for women & girls rugby.
- Greater awareness across the rugby system's marketing and commercial teams around the unique product offering and selling points for women's rugby is supporting better W&G commercial decision making and outcomes.

Balanced and optimised outcomes

- System shifts are delivering balanced outcomes across performance, fan and commercial.
- An optimised rugby calendar with increased performance opportunities is driving and delivering performance success, fan engagement, and commercial benefits.

Implementation ideas

How might Performance look in action

- Think redefining what a performance player looks like.
- Think telling W&G stories in unique and engaging ways (i.e. traditional media vs podcasters and influencers).
- Think informing, entertaining, and engaging fan interest through storytelling.
- Think Black Ferns players used alongside All Blacks for joint promotions.
- Think competitions that provide a pathway for talented W&G players, without cannibalising senior rugby player base.
- Think timing of performance competitions designed to effectively scaffold talent development for emerging and performance athletes, while being delivered at a time that will engage audiences to grow visibility and followers.
- Think increased visibility of our elite W&G players to drive increased sponsor interest for teams and individual players.

TRANSITIONS | NGĀ WHANAKETANGA

W&G entry and retention in rugby through safe, supported and confident transitions | Whanake ai ngā wāhine / kōtiro i te urunga tuatahitanga ki te whutupōro, i raro i te mahau haumarū, tautoko, māia anō hoki.

Transitions is about the journeys of women and girls through rugby. From a playing perspective, women & girls enter rugby at different ages and stages and want to enjoy and progress through rugby safely and confidently, in ways that meet their changing needs. Transitions is about providing all coaches, referees, managers and deliverers with the knowledge and skills to support quality women and girls participation and retention through the key transitional points, such as non-contact to tackle. Transitions also supports the journeys of females with aspirations to participate and progress as coaches, officials, or managers.

“There are few female players, most are under 18, often they enter the game as teenagers, and retention rates are poor.”

“There are small number of great coaches, male and female, with skills and experience coaching W&G in rugby. Their successes are there to be tapped into and shared.”

“Recent focus on W&G participation growth has not been matched by efforts to attract and develop coaches and referees, resulting in either an inability to assign a team coach and therefore field a team, or the use of supervisory roles without the rugby skills which leads to poor quality and unsafe experiences for females.”

You can find more participant quotes about the current state of transitions in rugby in “Transitions current state” on page 44

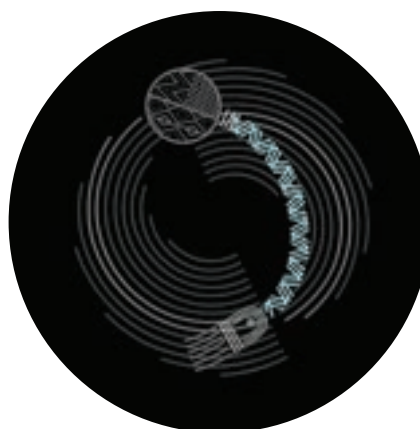


Prioritised Building Blocks

The following table outlines the building blocks for women & girls' entry and retention in rugby through safe, supported and confident transitions. These are grouped in priority order across ten years.

It is recommended organisations consider which Transition building blocks they already have in place, to help them choose the highest priority ones to focus on to strengthen their Transitions.

The Transitions building blocks will deliver women & girls entry and retention in rugby through safe, supported and confident transitions, contributing to the sustainability and success of women's rugby at every level.



Transitions Priority 1

- E1.1 Source and facilitate training on the key **differences around coaching and managing W&G** (i.e. hauora, psychosocial, physiological, cultural).
- E1.2 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on skill coaching to support **safe and confident W&G transitions into tackle rugby** (i.e. starting into tackle rugby or transitioning from non-contact into tackle).
- E1.3 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on the **philosophy and practice of girls-only offerings and flexible hybrid delivery** for successful W&G community rugby participation growth
- E1.4 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on how to run high quality **inclusive rugby experiences for diverse W&G** (i.e. safety, environment, culture, training).
- E1.5 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on effective and safe practices **for coaching a diverse W&G team mix** (i.e. spread of age, capability, experience).

Transitions Priority 2

- E2.1 Develop and deliver officials training on the **art of refereeing women and girls**, and rules and safety for refereeing W&G mixed capability and age games.
- E2.2 Collaboratively develop and deliver advanced coach training to support the **W&G talent transition from community rugby to performance rugby**.
- E2.3 Develop and deliver advanced coach training on **skill-specific offerings for W&G** (e.g. technical, tactical and physiological coaching requirements for female front rowers).

Transitions Priority 3

- E3.1 Collaboratively develop and deliver coach training for supporting **W&G transition from non-contact (i.e. Rip) into 7s rugby**.
- E3.2 Develop **W&G rules and refereeing practices** to best facilitate and support safe participation and performance by W&G in rugby.
- E3.3 Develop and support **W&G talented coach & referees** to transition from community to performance and high performance.

Outcomes

These are the suggested outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the Transitions focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

- Increase in average annual W&G player retention from 40% to 55%
- W&G Transition coaching, refereeing and rugby delivery training resources in place and 80% coaches, referees and managers supporting or delivering W&G rugby have completed W&G Transition training
- 100% rugby organisations across the system have at least two people with identified W&G delivery competencies
- Shift from 9.3% to 20% female coaches across the coaching pathway
- Shift from 82 referees to 330 female referees across the refereeing pathway
- Shift from 65% to 80% of W&G participants who feel their health, welfare and wellbeing is "fairly or very well supported" in rugby
- Reduction in the percentage of ACC injuries for women and girls rugby long-term

Why?

Women and girls enter rugby at different ages and want the choice to progress through non-contact and contact rugby pathways in ways that meet their needs. This makes them more likely to stay in the game. There are key transition points where women & girls enter or progress through rugby that need specific support to ensure safety and success. While the Small Blacks programme caters well for age and stage development of players entering rugby as children, that is not the only entry point for female players. Females often enter the game as teenagers or adult women, and sometimes straight into contact rugby, without the skills that other rugby players have built over time.

The smaller numbers of female players often mean a wide mix of experience, age and size within a single team and across girls-only competitions, which is an added safety and development challenge. Women and girls have identified a level of fear around getting involved in rugby, but a genuine desire for the knowledge and skill development that gives them the confidence to get involved and stay involved. Females are not only anatomically different than their male counterparts, they also have unique needs that are not being met by current rugby design and delivery. Innovation, flexibility and a female-centric approach are key to address this.

There are coaches, both male and female, that support W&G players, who have organically developed their skills throughout their rugby journey using training and resources based on the male game. People supporting W&G playing rugby (coaches, referees, managers, leaders, support staff etc) want access to knowledge and resources to confidently enable the success of female rugby players based on their unique needs as females. Many quality people involved across the rugby system are seeking the know-how to shift from being unconsciously incompetent, to being consciously competent, when it comes to supporting and engaging women & girls in rugby.

People who aspire to participate and develop as coaches, managers, officials and leaders across rugby equally need the development and support to transition and progress along pathways to success. This includes women, with the aim of increasing female engagement, capability, success and visibility in these roles at all levels of the rugby system. But equally it includes men in these roles, with the attributes and aspirations to support and enable women and girls'.

The Transitions focus area is about providing the professional development needed by volunteers and staff involved across the rugby system. It's about collaborative creation of learning resources and tools that are clearly communicated, and easily accessible online and/or in-person, for all people involved supporting W&G transitions across rugby. Where appropriate, it's about high quality, standardised and branded W&G capability development and transition support products that are well-promoted and highly visible for

females and those supporting and enabling W&G in rugby.

Impacts

A description of the proposed impacts of the shift in the Transitions focus area are summarised below:

Females and males confidently coaching safe W&G transitions

- Accessible coaching knowledge and skill development specific to coaching W&G in rugby (e.g. psychosocial and physiological differences, cultural considerations and holistic wellbeing) means coaches have the practical tools to build or adapt their skills to cater for diverse females and the female game.
- Knowledge to safely and confidently coach W&G transitions (i.e. start to tackle, rip to tackle) and W&G mix (age, capability, experience, culture) is enhancing player and coach experiences, improving W&G safety outcomes
- Targeted coaching skills to build and manage W&G player capabilities within various formats (e.g. rip, 7s, 10s, 15s) and relevant to W&G skillset gaps (e.g. front row) is enhancing the capability, safety and enjoyment of players.
- All coaches of W&G rugby are accessing advanced coaching development and support, with specific support, confidence and skill building for females on performance coaching pathways.

Females and males confidently officiating W&G rugby

- Accessible refereeing skill development, rules and refereeing transitions knowledge specific to officiating W&G rugby is providing officials with the practical tools to adapt their existing skills to females, the female game, and the different mix of ages, and capabilities.
- Females on performance refereeing pathways are accessing advanced capability development and support.

People running quality W&G rugby experiences

- Access to understanding, knowledge, and templates is making it easy to collaboratively design and deliver flexible, female-only, non-contact and tackle rugby offerings and pathways that deliver quality experiences and grow regional participation numbers.
- Applications of available knowledge specific to delivering quality W&G rugby experiences (e.g. safety, environments, facilities, training nuances, ethnicity considerations, female culture and ethos) is enhancing player wellbeing and retention.

Female participants supported on their rugby journeys

- Access to the skills and confidence is allowing W&G to safely enter and participate in rugby at any age or with any level of prior rugby knowledge or experience.
- The ability to work with upskilled male and female coaches is supporting W&G player safety, enjoyment, confidence and resilience along their pathways into and through different rugby formats and level (e.g. particularly for safe transitions into tackle rugby).
- Aspiring W&G players have the understanding, capability and resilience to transition from community participation, to performance, to high performance rugby.

Implementation ideas

How Transitions might look in action

- Think cross-fit for rugby – like a multi-week skill-build to prepare and certify W&G to take the field for safe and successful tackle rugby.
- Think TikTok skill drills for female players to learn safe movement patterns in fun ways.
- Think an easily accessible coaching app for volunteer coaches to use for ‘on the ground’ skills and drills that support player skill and format transitions.
- Think online coach refresher webinars to unlock the mysteries of coaching W&G and help with the physical differences for adapting coaching skills to female bodies.
- Think checklists for a heads up on the basics needed to deliver quality W&G rugby experiences (e.g. access to toilets!).
- Think best practice templates to outline how to market and deliver different girls-only offerings that meet females needs and your available numbers (e.g. girls-only have a go day, 6-week girls-only skill builder).
- Think mentoring programmes for talented female coaches to provide opportunities, development and support to take on higher level teams.

APPENDIX 1

Overall summary of the Women & Girls in Rugby System Strategy Priorities and Outcomes

The summary table below is a consolidated view of the individual priorities of each Focus Area. Though shown sequentially, in practice the priorities do not need to be linear and the timing of each will change depending on where the organisation is at in their journey, what part(s) of the plan they adopt, and the timing of investment into these initiatives. There is no one way or single journey to achieve the desired outcomes.

Culture Focus Area	Culture Priority 1	Culture Priority 2
An open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1.1 Share W&G data & information across the rugby system. A1.2 Enforce baseline member protection standards to keep W&G safe in all rugby environments. A1.3 Use quotas throughout the rugby system to drive significant increase in numbers and inclusion of diverse women in governance. A1.4 Support male champions to advocate and enable improved engagement of W&G. A1.5 Enable unconscious bias training to raise awareness and shift mindsets. A1.6 Establish W&G advisory groups so W&G have a collaborative voice in guiding female-centric rugby outcomes at all levels. A1.7 Support development and pathways for diverse female leaders across rugby. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A2.1 Collaborate on a shift and alignment of W&G branding that engages and connects W&G in rugby. A2.2 Use storytelling to raise visibility around diverse W&G journeys in rugby. A2.3 Facilitate governance training and resources that lift the quality of rugby governance. A2.4 Source and share data and insights on the needs of future/potential W&G participants. A2.5 Understand and enhance the positive impacts of Māori and Pacific Peoples cultural practices on inclusion and engagement of W&G in rugby.
System Focus Area	System Priority 1	System Priority 2
Focused rugby system collaboration, investment, roles, resourcing and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B1.1 Demonstrate intentional leadership of W&G rugby nationally and regionally. B1.2 Redefine rugby system relationships, roles, and responsibilities for W&G. B1.3 Collaboratively market W&G Community Rugby opportunities. B1.4 Identify W&G local community rugby needs and minimum standards (i.e. Club Review). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B2.1 Implement minimum requirements for W&G community rugby. B2.2 Enhance rugby system partnering, investment & accountability for mutually beneficial W&G outcomes. B2.3 Implement a risk reward approach to motivate delivery against W&G targets. B2.4 Upskill and empower community rugby people to deliver inclusive and engaging community rugby. B2.5 Review progress against W&G strategy and implementation outcomes and update priorities and targets.

Culture Priority 3

- A3.1 Improve **training and support for Chairs** to better facilitate diverse Boards and Committees.
- A3.2 Address negative **sideline behaviour** and drive positive and inclusive attitudes and behaviours towards W&G throughout rugby environments.
- A3.3 Enable new **systems and technology** to source and share W&G voices, data and insights.

Culture Long-Term Management

At least 40% women in governance across rugby organisations.

100% of rugby organisations obtain and use W&G data & insights to inform their decision-making.

System Priority 3

- B3.1 Enable **community rugby through technology** resources and support.
- B3.2 Attract, recruit, retain and develop **high quality women** into roles across the rugby system.
- B3.3 **Review progress** against W&G strategy and implementation outcomes and **update priorities and targets**.

System Long-Term Management

Evidence of rugby system partnership, investment and resourcing delivering positive W&G outcome shifts year on year.

100% of organisations are consistently meeting minimum requirements for W&G community rugby across the system.

Participation	Participation Priority 1	Participation Priority 2
Women & Girls participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility	<p>C1.1 Shift to PU-led W&G community rugby model with roles & responsibilities between regional and local delivery partners collaboratively agreed to drive quality experiences and increased participation for W&G in each region.</p> <p>C1.2 Deliver athlete skill-build and injury prevention programmes for safe and confident entry or transition into tackle rugby for 11-18+ year olds.</p> <p>C1.3 Increase girls-only non-contact offerings (e.g. Rip) for 11-12 year olds that fit player numbers.</p> <p>C1.4 Increase mixed or girls-only tackle offerings for 11-12 year olds that consider adolescence factors and fit player numbers.</p> <p>C1.5 Increase girls-only non-contact offerings (i.e. Rip) for 13-15 year olds to lengthen non-contact pathway and provide entry option for new players.</p>	<p>C2.1 Increase girls-only tackle offerings for 13-18 year olds using formats (e.g. 7s, 10s, 15s) appropriate to player numbers and to building pathways, consolidated delivery as needed for safe quality experiences, and scheduling to avoid other sport clashes.</p> <p>C2.2 Increase age-based girls-only festivals or have-a-go days for 11-15 year olds to connect and engage girls in rugby.</p> <p>C2.3 Increase girls-only festivals or camps for 15-18+ year olds to connect and engage females of different cultures and/or capabilities to support retention and pathway transitions.</p> <p>C2.4 Investigate regional or local partnerships with other sports to grow and enhance W&G rugby participation in innovative ways.</p>

Performance	Performance Priority 1	Performance Priority 2
Balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for W&G rugby – high-performance, fan and commercial	<p>D1.1 Review and develop a planned approach to W&G competitions, performance and high performance pathways (e.g. Women's High Performance Plan).</p> <p>D1.2 Review and develop a planned approach to W&G talent identification, development and support for players, coaches, referees, and managers (e.g. Women's Talent ID Plan).</p> <p>D1.3 Redefine the Performance and High Performance delivery partners relationships, roles, and responsibilities for W&G.</p> <p>D1.4 Source and share W&G commercial insights.</p> <p>D1.5 Source and share W&G fan engagement & brand insights.</p>	<p>D2.1 Implement seamless pathway connections and transitions from community to performance (e.g. Women's High Performance & Talent ID Plan implementation).</p> <p>D2.2 Collaboratively drive cross-regional performance opportunities to foster female performance aspirations (e.g. Heartland, FPC).</p> <p>D2.3 Review and instigate a shift to optimise the balance of W&G outcomes across high performance, fan and commercial needs.</p>

Transitions Focus Area	Transitions Priority 1	Transitions Priority 2
Women & Girls entry and retention in rugby through safe, supported and confident transitions	<p>E1.1 Source and facilitate training on the key differences around coaching and managing W&G (i.e. hauora, psychosocial, physiological, cultural).</p> <p>E1.2 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on skill coaching to support safe and confident W&G transitions into tackle rugby (i.e. starting into tackle rugby or transitioning from non-contact into tackle).</p> <p>E1.3 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on the philosophy and practice of girls-only offerings and flexible hybrid delivery for successful W&G community rugby participation growth</p> <p>E1.4 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on how to run high quality inclusive rugby experiences for diverse W&G (i.e. safety, environment, culture, training).</p> <p>E1.5 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on effective and safe practices for coaching a diverse W&G team mix (i.e. spread of age, capability, experience).</p>	<p>E2.1 Develop and deliver officials training on the art of refereeing W&G, and rules and safety for refereeing W&G mixed capability and age games.</p> <p>E2.2 Collaboratively develop and deliver advanced coach training to support the W&G talent transition from community rugby to performance rugby.</p> <p>E2.3 Develop and deliver advanced coach training on skill-specific offerings for W&G (e.g. technical, tactical and physiological coaching requirements for female front rowers).</p>

Participation Priority 3

- C3.1 Extend the **non-contact offerings pathway (i.e. Rip)** for **16-18 year olds** using girls-only and/or mixed for a quality experience that supports retention.
- C3.2 Increase **skills-based girls-only tournaments or festivals** to enhance tackle pathway and talent identification opportunities (7s, 10s, 15s).
- C3.3 Increase **girls-only non-contact offerings (e.g. Rippa)** for **Under 10 year olds** to provide an alternative to mixed Rippa teams and/or competitions to fit player numbers.
- C3.4 Retain and grow **adult female numbers** and provide quality W&G rugby experiences that support sustainable senior club participation.

Participation Long-Term Management

Measurable year-on-year increase in girls-only offerings at all stages along the pathway.

Measurable year-on-year increase in participant satisfaction with quality of W&G rugby experiences.

W&G player numbers are growing year-on-year at an average rate of 2,500 players/year (to 50,000 at 2033).

Performance Priority 3

- D3.1 Implement more **strategically balanced W&G competitions**, and performance and high performance pathways (i.e. High Performance, commercial and fan).
- D3.2 Further develop **W&G high performance opportunities and environments** to enhance W&G ability to win with mana.
- D3.3 Optimise the **W&G playing calendar**.

Performance Long-Term Management

Sustained and improving performance results by Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens are attracting measurable increases in fans and growth of commercial investment.

Athlete wellbeing ratings are meeting targets established in high performance plans.

Measurable growth and retention of quality W&G performance coaches and referees.

Transitions Priority 3

- E3.1 Collaboratively develop and deliver coach training for supporting **W&G transition from non-contact (i.e. Rip) into 7s rugby**.
- E3.2 Develop **W&G rules and refereeing practices** to best facilitate and support safe participation and performance by W&G in rugby.
- E3.3 Develop and support **W&G talented coach & referees** to transition from community to performance and high performance.

Transitions Long-Term Management

Increase in average annual W&G Player Retention from 40% to 55%.

Reduction in the percentage of ACC injuries for W&G rugby long-term.

APPENDIX 2

How was this System Strategy developed and who contributed?

System-wide stakeholder involvement

This 10-year system strategy sets a shared direction and a series of outcomes as rugby works to engage more women & girls (W&G) across the system. It encompasses females playing the game, as well as coaching, officiating, managing, governing, leading, or being involved in rugby in whatever way they choose.

This system strategy for Women & Girls in Rugby is the result of 1,547 hours of passionate input from 2,221 stakeholders across New Zealand's rugby landscape. That's the equivalent to almost 195 eight-hour days of insights.

Stakeholder input into this strategy

- 76 hours of interviews of people and organisations across the rugby system (individual and group).
- 1,938 responses to the 41-question current participant survey (average of 16 mins ~517 hours). 1,407 surveys via NZR registered members, 531 via social media.
- 189 W&G rugby stakeholders attended 4-hour in-person workshops (i.e. 756 hours). Volunteers, coaches, managers, referees, players, staff, and other interested people.
- 60 NZR Executives and staff attended 3-hour in-person workshops (i.e. 180 hours).
- 18 stakeholders attended 1 hour virtual webinar (i.e. 18 hours).
- 488 strategic issues or opportunities identified by rugby stakeholders.
- Collaborative implementation plans developed cross-regionally, with 21 individual implementation ideas provided through online feedback.
- Input via desktop review of a wide range of existing rugby and broader sport sector documents, plans, and research reports, such as the Black Ferns Review (see References for full list).

The strategy development and associated change management process were designed and facilitated by Strategic Reality (Sarah Beaman) and Business365 (Fiona Taylor), under the authority of NZR Head of Women's Rugby (Claire Beard). The entire process was enabled through generous financial support from Sky Sport.

New Zealand Rugby is very grateful for the significant stakeholder input and support which has informed and shaped this New Zealand Women and Girls in Rugby System Strategy.

Thank you to all the amazing people across rugby who generously gave their time and perspectives to inform this strategy. There are already many positive initiatives underway to engage women & girls in rugby in pockets of the country. This strategy has been co-designed to provide all stakeholders with the clarity on the direction and building blocks to drive positive change in a focused, prioritised, and sustainable way across every part of rugby in New Zealand.

APPENDIX 3

What is the current state of women & girls in rugby in 2022?

Brief Context

The New Zealand rugby system has been developed over 150 years to what it is today. Women & girls' engagement in rugby has existed throughout this time but became more evident around 30 years ago, with female players establishing a women's national team to compete internationally. The women and girls' game and engagement more broadly across rugby has grown incrementally since then.

New Zealand Rugby (NZR) operates a top-down funding model, one of only two sports in New Zealand that is not reliant on participant income to fund the game. This gives rugby the opportunity to make targeted investment to drive shared priorities for W&G across the rugby system.

Women & girls current engagement levels

As covered in the introduction, the current state of W&G in rugby was determined through consultation with the wider rugby system and the information in the next section reflects that consultation, survey data and NZR statistics and data.

There are small numbers of female players, with most under 18 years of age. They often first enter the game as teenagers, and retention rates are low, yet current players tell us they really enjoy rugby.

There are small numbers of women engaged in other key roles across rugby, and limited visibility of the female role models currently contributing across the game.

There are few females in governance and leadership roles across the rugby system and the acceptance and inclusion of women & girls across rugby is low.

The top 10 aspects women & girls enjoy most about rugby

1. Playing
2. Team camaraderie and support
3. Being with friends and whānau
4. Attributes of rugby (i.e., physicality, aggression etc)
5. Fun
6. Community connection
7. The challenge, developing and improving
8. Meeting new people
9. Fitness
10. Competition, success or winning

Statistics on current engagement of W&G in Rugby (as at July/August 2022)

- Average of around 24,000 females playing annually across the last five years. 26,551 registered female players in 2021 (NB. includes traditional weekly rugby and festivals, and double counts those involved in both). 34% Māori, 20% Pacific Peoples.
- Females make up 17.5% of rugby's playing population, males the other 82.5%.
- 87.5% of female players under 18 compared to 68% male players under 18. General trends show girls start rugby at 4-5 years, drop off at age 11, start at 13/14 years, drop off at 15.
- 40% average annual retention of female players.
- Females involved in the game enjoy it and score rugby enjoyment 8.6/10.
- Current female participants have a high likelihood to recommend getting involved in rugby to their friends (Net Promoter Score (NPS) +47).
- In 2021, only 21.3% female volunteers of the total coaches, refs and volunteer administration roles across rugby.
- 9.3% of rugby coaches are female, that's 945 female coaches of 10,150 total coaches.
- 5.7% of rugby referees are female, that's 82 referees of 1,443 total referees.
- 48.2% of volunteer administrators are females (that's 2,302 of 4,730 volunteers in NPC unions and 366 of 795 volunteers in Heartland Unions).
- There are 3% female Chairs across rugby Boards, that is one female chair of NZ Māori Rugby Board, but no others at NZR, Super Clubs or Provincial Unions.
- There are 24% female Board members across the rugby system (i.e., 57 women from 237 positions on Super Clubs and Provincial Union Boards).
- NZR Board has 36% female Board members – that's four females of 11 Board and Presidential Suite roles (including one female Emerging Director role).
- There are 10.4% female CEOs across the rugby system (NZR, Super Clubs, Provincial Unions) (three PU CEOs)

APPENDIX 4

What do current participants say are the priorities for improvement?

W&G currently involved in rugby identified the barriers impacting their involvement, and the opportunities to better engage W&G, as well as the changes needed to improve their rugby experiences. These provide a useful summary of the current state through participants' eyes and are further illustrated by a series of quotes that give a sense of the starting point for this W&G in Rugby System Strategy.

The Top 10 barriers for W&G engagement

1. Judgemental environments / attitudes
2. Lack of club / school support or understanding
3. Low participation numbers
4. Physicality and fear of injury from tackling
5. Lack of female-only teams and competitions
6. Lack of equity, respect or value for females
7. Limited team numbers or competition quality
8. Quality of coaching or development
9. Lack of inclusion (on-field and off-field)
10. Lack of opportunities to participate

“Well I can speak for myself and my girls, it would definitely be our periods. Lack of amenities for women at fields/clubs.”

“We are trying to encourage participation in a system that was never designed for us or our success. The modifications that have been made are piecemeal and disconnected.”

“People judging girls is the worst thing about women’s rugby.”

“Thinking tackle is the only eventuality. Can it be Rippa for ever?!”

The Top 10 opportunities to get more W&G engaged in rugby

1. Innovative / flexible delivery approaches to enable girls-only rugby
2. Female skill coaching / technique development for confidence / injury prevention
3. Female-friendly participation Have-a-Go events, festivals or camps
4. Media, advertising and recruitment to target markets
5. Increase in general visibility, awareness & celebration of W&G rugby
6. Use of Black Ferns or local female rugby roles models to inspire
7. School-based promotion
8. Improved opportunities for school-aged girls
9. Welcoming and inclusive attitudes & supportive environments
- 10=Growth in participation for juniors
- 10=Clear and visible W&G pathways

“Countless (barriers), uniform, changing rooms, coaches and lack of female coaches, lack of formats appropriate to players, size and age of player. Most unions are only scratching the surface of the potential for young players.”

“Old school attitudes towards women’s rugby, bias and trying the same stuff over and over with bad results but not changing things... Not just trying what has been tried for the men’s game and expecting it to work.”

The Top 12 changes needed to the current rugby experience to encourage W&G future involvement in rugby

1. More playing opportunities
2. Youth development
3. Rugby formats and delivery
4. Girls-only rugby
5. Level of support, good organisational management & relationships
6. Quality of coaching and skill development
7. Female engagement, role models and recognition
8. Participation growth
9. People (culture, attitude and language)
10. Equity and equal opportunities
11. Inclusion, welcome and respect
12. Quality of referees

“Traditional Eurocentric mindsets that are outdated and do not meet the needs of current fans, players and women who want to be involved in the game. Starting from governance & other leadership positions.”

“Create fun environments and innovative competitions that meet the needs of the participants, whatever their ages. Be bold and exciting and cut the shackles of traditional rugby thinking in terms of competition formats and forms of the game.”

APPENDIX 5

Culture current state

The following section outlines the statistics or insights most relevant to the Culture Focus Area. This is based on New Zealand rugby system stakeholder feedback, current participant surveys including verbatim comments, and NZR registrations data from July/August 2022. This provides a "line in the sand" to use as comparison when reviewing progress around the Culture shift in future.

Aspects where Culture is having positive impact, as indicated by stakeholder feedback

- Some PUs recognise the benefits that engaging more women into the sport bring to the overall culture of the sport for all those involved.
- Females are grateful for the opportunities and support they currently get.
- The camaraderie, fitness, and fun of rugby as a winter sport make it attractive to females.
- Rugby clubs are often seen as great community connectors and social hubs.
- Māori and Pacific cultures by their nature are more holistic and inclusive of females.

Barriers around Culture and environment, as identified by current participants

- More than a quarter of current participants indicate the biggest barrier making it difficult for women & girls to engage in rugby is "the judgemental environment and culture".
- Followed by the "lack of club / school support or understanding".
- Also, in the top 10 barriers were "lack of equity, respect or value for females" and "lack of inclusion (on-field & off-field)".

Negative aspects of the rugby culture, as reflected by current participants

- "being told rugby isn't for them".
- "Old school men on boards that don't accept girls play rugby too".
- "The persona of being gay if you play in a male-dominated sport".
- "Other player not always believe on my skills... just because I am a girl".
- "Snotty parents about having girls in the team".

- "Feel embarrassed to play a so-called boy's games and they will get made fun of".
- "Men running women's rugby who are boofheads and think woman (sic) are inferior".
- "Boys comments about why girls play rugby. They need to be educated in how rugby isn't just for boys".
- "People being sexist about them playing, and they don't get the ball much since people reckon their (sic) not going to do good".
- "Stereotypes around rugby, 'men's game'".
- "Men putting women down".

Few women at local rugby decision-making tables or in leadership roles

- 3% female Chairs across NZR, NZMRB, Super Rugby and Provincial Unions (two Chairs across 33 organisations)
- 36% female board members on New Zealand Rugby Board and 33% at New Zealand Māori Rugby Board
- 18% female board members across Super Clubs (6/33 roles) and 25% across Provincial Unions (51/204)
- Zero W&G Advisory groups
- 10.4% female CEOs across the system (3/33 roles)
- 44% female executives at NZR (4/9 roles)
- 28% senior managers at NZR (8/29 roles)
- 21% community rugby managers across 14 NPC/FPC unions (3/14 roles)

NB. numbers have slowly increased in recent years.

Few women in decision-making across the rugby club system, as reinforced by interviewees

- There are "some" females on Junior Club committees, "very few" on Senior Club Committees, "few" on Junior Advisory Boards and "almost none" on Council of Clubs – actual data to quantify this is still required.
- Females exist across most operational areas but are seen to have limited influence or visibility. Their "work stories" aren't shared to attract other females into the organisation.

Rugby culture and environments not welcoming or inclusive of all females, as reinforced by current participants

- "Limited females in key roles - largely is still male dominated and this often will prevent females from wanting to become engaged."
- "The rugby culture is not suited to everyone, and culture is mainly adopted from men's rugby teams which may not suit majority of women in general."
- "It can be a bit of a boys club, sometimes your opinion is not as valued by men in a rugby situation although I am experienced and good at my job."
- "The male dominated club committees. They are made up of males from the 60s, 70s and 80s who don't realize society has changed and keep trying to run the clubs the same way. They need to change and must change."
- "It's quite a butch sport - even the role models look really butch - this is generalising but it's how it is..."
- "...The drinking culture in club rugby is really bad, not a good environment for young people."
- "It's a system not built for them, its built by men for men. And marginally tweaked for women & girls."

What's most important for quality rugby experiences, as indicated by participants

- A quality off-field experience that is friendly and welcoming (72%), feeling welcome and valued (69%), enjoyment of being in rugby (66%), well-organised competitions or events (60%), fair and equal treatment for all (59%), females in and around rugby (57%) and good management (57%)
- A quality on-field experience that is fun (82%), good sportsmanship (79%), team spirit (77%), enjoyment of being in rugby (74%), feeling welcome and valued (72%), skill development opportunities (69%) and fair and equal treatment for all (65%).

System current state

The following section outlines the statistics or insights most relevant to the System Focus Area. This is based on New Zealand rugby system stakeholder feedback, current participant surveys including verbatim comments, and NZR registrations data from July/August 2022. This provides a “line in the sand” to use as comparison when reviewing progress around the System shift in future.

New Zealand W&G Rugby Structure Overview

- Four Super Rugby Aupiki teams – Blues, Chiefs Manawa, Hurricanes Poua, Matakā (based in Christchurch)
- Four W&G Regional Hubs
- 26 Provincial PUs with 13 Farah Palmer Cup (FPC) teams
- Heartland rugby competitions
- Top four Secondary School Competition
- Māori rugby tournaments and U18 Mareikura team

Women in rugby (WiR) investment 2019, outlined in NZR EY WiR Business Plan

- 4.5% of NZR total spend
- \$3.8m sponsorship & licensing
- \$537k broadcast rights

Areas that support System development and growth

- NZR 2025 Strategy identifies a focus on supercharging women & girls’ participation.
- Significant investment and top-down funding model can allow NZR to make targeted investment to drive shared priorities.
- Paid initiative or role-based investment deliver good outcomes increasing engagement and player numbers.
- A desire from PUs to leave the past behind, change the relationship and collaboratively build a new way of working together into the future and have space to work as each region.
- NZR operational support is perceived to be there and NZR has a lot to offer if stakeholders ask for it.
- Reviews & reports have elevated awareness of the issues around the W&G game and W&G in rugby.
- Relationships between operational staff at NZR and PUs appear strong, particularly in the community rugby space.

Areas that hamper System development and growth

- Lack of direction or strategy from NZR has meant a lack of clarity around shared priorities, plans, roles, investment and accountability across the rugby system and a lack of ‘how’ to strategically grow women & girls’ rugby.
- NZR governance and leadership are currently not seen by stakeholders to be genuinely committed or “walking the talk” around support and prioritisation of W&G in rugby.
- Historical strategic under-emphasis on the importance of community rugby for the sustainability of a successful rugby system.
- Fallout of COVID – restructure and reduced focus, support and investment for two years has had a very negative impact on W&G in rugby.
- Investment is largely initiative-based rather than strategic.
- Funding model for W&G is the same for all regions regardless of level of focus, number of teams or growth in numbers.
- Lack of real insights of the true market size & opportunity of W&G rugby makes it challenging to trust the value and investment potential without insights and evidence-based info.
- Reviews and reports have been confronting and created a lot of emotion. Despite the good intentions, at this stage the perception is that not a lot of progress is being made.
- Significant restructuring over the past three years and staff turnover across the rugby system hampered efforts to ensure stakeholders know what resources and help is available.
- Men’s rugby was built and has grown from its foundations over 150 years. NZR is building the women & girls rugby system top-down, bottom-up essentially replicating the men’s set up without catering for the specific needs of women & girls and the current scale and growth of the women’s game.
- NZR is currently driving creation of traditional delivery structures and approaches, regulations and performance pathways that are on track to replicate the problems created in the men’s game, rather than taking the opportunity to learn from mistakes and approach the women’s game differently.

Participation current state

The following section outlines the statistics or insights most relevant to the Participation Focus Area. This is based on New Zealand rugby system stakeholder feedback, current participant surveys including verbatim comments, and NZR registrations data from July/August 2022. This provides a 'line in the sand' to use as comparison when reviewing progress around the Participation shift in future.

Positive data on participation, as identified in participant surveys

NZR has a unique opportunity to accelerate the growth of W&G rugby with the Rugby World Cup in October 2022 and 2022 being the year of women's rugby. Data and participant feedback indicates a positive feeling for the game and its future.

- 26,551 players in 2021 – 47.7% NZ European, 30.5% Māori, 16.5% Pacific Peoples, 3.8% other and 1.5% Asian.
- 90% growth over past 11 years.
- Strong continued interest in playing (63%).
- Success of Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens over the last five years has created aspirational goals.
- Overall interest in rugby from July 2022 participants survey 8.6/10 and a Net Promoter Score of +47.
- Heartland rugby numbers grew significantly in 2022 (16% growth for Junior Clubs and Senior Clubs added just under 300 new registered players).

Top 11 opportunities to engage more W&G in rugby, as identified in current participation surveys

1. Innovative / flexible delivery approaches to enable girls-only rugby
2. Female skill coaching / technique development for confidence / injury prevention
3. Female -friendly participation, have a go, festivals
4. Media/advertising/recruitment to target markets
5. Increased visibility/awareness/celebration of W&G rugby
6. School-based promotion
7. Improved opportunities for school-aged girls
8. Welcoming and inclusive attitudes & supportive environments
9. Growth in participation for juniors
10. Clear and visible W&G pathways
11. Make it fun

Areas that support participant growth and development

- Variations of the traditional game are very popular amongst female participants (7s, 10s).
- There are small numbers of great coaches, male and female, with skills and experience coaching W&G in rugby. Their successes are there to be tapped into and shared.
- Co-coaching partnerships between males and females creates cross-fertilisation of rugby technical skills and more inclusive coaching approaches.
- Some female referees are getting regional and national opportunities and success.
- There are passionate, dedicated, hardworking volunteers who understand the positive influence and impact rugby can have on the whole community.

Aspects of player participation and pathways that hamper the development of the game, as identified by rugby stakeholders

- Lack of player numbers and lack of clarity on where and how to engage in rugby.
- Population base in smaller areas is a challenge to develop sustainable 15s girls-only rugby teams and comps.
- Lack of funding, resources and playing opportunities across schools and clubs.
- Confusion around the right structure of game, right versions, right competitions, and the right calendar to create sustainability across the ecosystem.
- Senior club rugby is fragile in most places with few teams, low club loyalty, and a wide range of ages and experience in teams creates coaching, safety, and social challenges.
- Lack of clear and sustainable pathways for Heartland Union players, and lack of domestic pathways in the 7s rugby space.
- Reliance on schools to champion rugby when charged with delivering all sports. If no champion exists, rugby is forgotten.

Top 10 barriers for W&G to engage in rugby, as identified in current participation surveys

1. Judgemental environments and attitudes
2. Lack of club / school support or understanding
3. Low participation numbers
4. Physicality and fear of injury from tackling
5. Lack of female-only teams and competitions
6. Lack of equity, respect or value for females
7. Limited team numbers or competition quality
8. Quality of coaching or development
9. Lack of inclusion (on-field and off-field)
10. Lack of opportunities to participate

Performance current state

The following section outlines the statistics or insights most relevant to the Performance Focus Area. This is based on New Zealand rugby system stakeholder feedback, current participant surveys including verbatim comments, and NZR registrations data from July/August 2022. This provides a "line in the sand" to use as comparison when reviewing progress around the Performance shift in future.

Areas that support the Performance focus area

- Super Rugby Aupiki seen to bridge the talent gap to the Black Ferns and deliver a rugby product with appeal to participants and potential sponsors.
- FPC provides a partially funded opportunity for more talented W&G across 13 unions to have a higher level of competition than locally.
- Some PUs are attracting sponsorship and grant investment into initiatives that engage women in rugby. Often driven by the sponsors, who recognise women & girls rugby is a fantastic channel to reach their target market and decision-makers.
- Strong Māori development programme supporting younger wāhine.
- Super clubs generate \$45m from Super Rugby and much of that remains in the game.
- Black Ferns 15s have won six Rugby World Cups.
- Black Ferns Sevens won gold at the inaugural Women's Rugby 7s tournament at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and have claimed six World Sevens Series crowns since 2012.
- Black Ferns Sevens also delivered silver at the Rio Olympics and went one better at the Tokyo Olympics, winning gold.

Areas that hamper the Performance focus area

- General recognition that rugby can't compete head on for female athletes with other more established sports (e.g. netball, hockey) and needs to innovate timing and delivery to attract cross-sport participants.
- Senior club rugby is fragile in most places with few teams, low club loyalty, a wide range of ages and experience in teams which creates coaching, safety and social challenges.
- There is frustration at the lack of clear and sustainable pathways for Heartland Union players.
- There is a lack of domestic pathways in the 7s rugby space.
- Limited games/season see participants move to sports where they get more competition time and a better-quality product.
- NZR and PUs undervalue the commercial attractiveness of most things related to women in rugby. Often the women's side is sold as a 'package' with men's rugby.
- All Blacks are the brand for rugby at NZR. The Black Ferns are a link deeper in the website, and they don't have their own presence, which unconsciously reduces the value and profile of women in rugby.
- Continued lack of marketing and media focus given to the women's game and women in rugby more broadly, and a perception W&G are treated as the poor cousin.
- Across the rugby system there's a general disconnect on the role of commercial, brand, marketing and media in the women's game and the wider W&G fanbase and market opportunity.

Performance facts and figures

- In 2021 89.3% of women & girls' rugby players are under 18 (64.7% of players were under 12, 24.6% were aged 13-18) only 10.7% were over 19 years.
- Approximately 3,000 selection pool of players to service age grade, FPC, Super Rugby Aupiki, Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens.
- There were 18.5% female PU coaches (43), two female high performance Aupiki head coaches and an additional four females in the coaching set ups.
- One female Black Ferns assistant coach and only one ever female Black Ferns Head coach (1994).

Transitions current state

The following section outlines the statistics or insights most relevant to the Transitions Focus Area. This is based on New Zealand rugby system stakeholder feedback, current participant surveys including verbatim comments, and NZR registrations data from July/August 2022. This provides a “line in the sand” to use as comparison when reviewing progress around the Transitions shift in future.

Few female players, mostly under 18 years old, often entering the game as teenagers, and poor retention rates

- 87.5% of female players under 18 compared to 68% male players under 18.
- General trends show girls start rugby at 4-5 years, drop off at age 9, a new cohort starts at 13/14, drop off at 15.
- Average retention of female players is only 40% across all systems (varying retention rates within certain systems such as Small Blacks, Primary School, Secondary School, Senior Rugby).

Areas that support the Transitions focus area

- Health, welfare and wellbeing is “fairly or very well supported” in rugby, as identified by most W&G (65%). Wellbeing improvement priorities, as identified by current participants:
 - Rugby skill development approaches (72%).
 - Injury prevention education or approaches (57%).
 - Personal learning and development opportunities (53%).
 - Wellbeing mentoring and mana-supporting environment (46%).
 - Health & safety in off-field environments (44%).
- There are women & girls within the current system who expressed interest in taking on coaching, refereeing and governance/management roles, with the necessary development, support, and opportunities:
 - Around 524 females surveyed are interested in coaching. Those most interested in coaching juniors are aged 14-24, while those interested in school coaching are aged 19-24.
 - Around 364 females surveyed are interested in refereeing, more so at junior and school levels.
 - Around 364 females surveyed are interested in governance and administration, with around 291 females keen to do so at senior club, PU or national levels.

- Some PUs have delivered ad hoc opportunities to support player transition:
 - Developing and coaching bespoke female-only player courses for starting tackle rugby (e.g. Canterbury Rugby Ready, North Harbour Rip2Tackle).
 - Delivering girls-only festival events for targeted age-groups (e.g. Bay of Plenty Secondary School Girls 10-aside Festival).
 - Designing and running cross-club skill development sessions that cater for targeted skill levels (Manawatu Future Cyclones).

Genuine openness to delivery innovation and change specific to W&G needs, as identified by participants

- Tackle formats of the game are most popular (as that is often what is available), 15s (84%), 10s (80%) and 7s (70%). However, 58% are very keen on non-contact rugby.
- 74% of girls find it “preferable or highly preferable” to play in girls-only teams.
- Quality of experience for females in mixed teams can be diluted – lack of ball, being treated differently and feeling isolated, but it’s often the only playing option.
- Coaching and refereeing not servicing W&G participation needs, as noted through data and stakeholder feedback.
- Recent focus on W&G participation growth has not been matched by efforts to attract and develop coaches and referees, resulting in either an inability to assign a team coach and therefore field a team, or the use of supervisory roles without the rugby skills which leads to poor quality and unsafe experiences for females.
- Traditional male-centric coaching approaches are not always effective for coaching W&G. Coaches reflect a need for development training (for male coaches in particular) to provide the skills and confidence to adapt to the “art of coaching females” and other modern coaching philosophies and approaches.
- The lack of female coaches across the system is perceived to be from a lack of pathways and opportunities to develop skills and experience, females’ reticence to put their hands up, and lack of support for those involved.
- There is a lack of specific coaching resources that enable safe entry and phased skill building, like the Small Blacks approach but adapted for older females who enter the sport as teenagers / women without the skills or experience to participate effectively and safely.

- Coaching secondary school and senior female rugby has increased challenges. A wide variety of skills, ages and sizes within a team makes drills and skill-building logically harder and creates on-field safety issues when less skilled, younger and/or smaller players are contacting with more skilled, older or larger players.

Low numbers of W&G engaged in coaching, based on NZR participation data

- 9.3% of rugby coaches are female, that's 945 female coaches of 10,150 total coaches.
- 9.3% female club coaches (732).
- 17% female primary school coaches (43).
- 7.1% female secondary school coaches (125).
- 28.5% female sub-union coaches (2).
- 18.5% female PU coaches (43).
- Two female high performance head coaches at Super Rugby Aupiki and four females in the coaching set ups.
- One female Black Ferns assistant coach.
- Only one female Black Ferns head coach (1994).

Few female referees, based on NZR participation data

- There are a small number of female referees in various parts of the country achieving regional and national opportunities, success and some visibility.
- In general, there are very few female referees:
 - 5.7% of rugby referees are female, that's 82 referees of 1443 total referees.

Top 13 aspects most important for a quality on-field rugby experience for W&G, as indicated by participants

1. Fun (82%)
2. Good sportsmanship (79%)
3. Team spirit (77%)
4. Enjoyment of being in rugby (74%)
5. Feeling welcome and valued (72%)
6. Skill development opportunities (69%)
7. Fair and equal treatment for all (65%)
8. Quality coaching (65%)
9. Female support in and around rugby (63%)
10. Participating with friends (61%)
11. Good team management (61%)
12. Quality refereeing (58%)
13. Female role models (57%)

APPENDIX 6

How does this System Strategy align to New Zealand Rugby and New Zealand Māori Rugby Board?

This strategy is underpinned and aligns with the NZR 2025 Strategy and the NZMRB 2025 Strategy.

New Zealand Rugby Strategy 2025

Our vision	To inspire and unify through rugby			
Our values	Be welcoming Te pou maioha	Be our best Te pou hiranga	Be passionate Te pou ihihi	Play fair Te pou tika
Kia toa rangatira ai / Winning with mana				
Our goal is to win pinnacle events and enhance the mana and legacy of rugby in New Zealand. We will achieve this for our women and men by driving an aligned, world-leading professional rugby and performance environment that embraces Te Ara Ranga Tira through:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable and engaging competitions 2. An aligned and effectively-resourced player development pathway. 3. Identification, development and retention of our best people who work in the game. 4. Effective investment in critical areas of competitive advantage 5. Enhancing care and connection and driving high standards of performance culture throughout rugby. 6. Strong working relationships with key partners. 				
Te tumu whutupōro / Rugby at the heart of our communities				
Our goal is for rugby to be at the heart of communities, and communities at the heart of rugby. We will achieve this by:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supercharging women's and girls' participation in the game, springboarding off the success of an inspirational RWC2021 (played in 2022). 2. Increasing opportunities to engage in rugby through a participant-centred approach. 3. Enhancing players' experiences through the quality of coaching and refereeing. 4. Creating an inclusive, empowering and enjoyable environment for teenagers, women and girls. 5. Future-proofing all parts of the rugby delivery system. 6. Supporting Provincial and Heartland Unions to sustainably deliver on their purpose. 				
Tākaro tūturu, waitohu pūmau / Loved game, loved brands				
Our goal is to ensure our game and our brands shine locally and on the global stage. We will achieve this by:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Embracing our role as kaitiaki of rugby, capturing and inspiring the hearts and minds of New Zealanders. 2. Building a deep understanding of our customers through rich analytics and insights. 3. Creating and building direct relationships with identified fans in target markets. 4. Understanding and investing in our priority brands. 5. Being a sustainable and socially responsible corporate citizen and outstanding commercial partner. 6. Creating world-class customer and partner experiences. 				
Tukuna te pitomata pākihi whutupōro / Unleashing rugby's commercial potential				
Our goal is to unleash rugby's commercial potential and invest sustainably in the game. We will achieve this by:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supercharging revenue streams through content, customer data and global connectivity. 2. Exponentially growing our global connected and engaged fan database. 3. Unleashing and maximising the unique value of our brands. 4. Building innovative and world-leading partnerships. 5. Creating an efficient and sustainable operating model, to support all of rugby. 				
Hāpai hauora o te tangata / Enhancing the welfare of our players				
Our goal is to ensure every player is safe and well. We will achieve this by:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enabling environments that support the physical, mental and cultural wellbeing of all players. 2. Continuing to review and evolve the laws and structures of the game to safeguard our players. 3. Investing in research, data and education to ensure we are at the forefront of player safety and wellbeing initiatives. 4. Focusing on the recruitment, retention and upskilling of medical staff and first responders who support player welfare across the game. 5. Implementing leading edge programmes that reduce the incidence and severity of injuries across all levels of the game. 6. Recognising the growth of female participation and delivering initiatives that address their specific needs for safety and wellbeing. 				

Mauri tū, mauri ora / Thriving people, thriving game

Our goal is to enable a world-leading sports organisation and engaging, diverse and inclusive environments across rugby. We will achieve this by:

1. Realising our ambition through identifying, recruiting and supporting high-performing individuals and NZR.
2. Building internal leadership capability to effect transformational shifts and impacts in rugby.
3. Developing equitable, inclusive pathways for people of any gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.
4. Working with Māori & Pacific communities to build our capability and responsiveness.
5. Creating safe rugby environments through the delivery of quality education and change programmes aimed at reducing harm.

Whakataki hangarau / Leading through technology

Our goal is to become the most technologically-enabled rugby organisation in the world. We will achieve this by:

1. Identifying, creating and deploying best practice community rugby platforms to support how communities connect with rugby, and how rugby connects with communities.
2. Enhancing existing digital platforms and pioneering innovative new ones to connect with our fans and partners.
3. Harnessing the power of data and analytics to enable informed decision making and operational excellence.
4. Identifying and developing leading edge professional rugby platforms to support our teams and maximise competitive advantage.

New Zealand Māori Rugby Board Strategy 2022-2025

Our vision	To re-imagine rugby to ensure positive outcomes for Māori			
Our whakapapa	Whakapapa (genealogy); a deep connection to our tipuna/tupuna in te ao Māori and acknowledging over 100 years of Māori rugby. Wairuatanga (spirituality); the principle of cultural integration that holds all things together over time; it is as material as it is metaphysical, as contemporary as it is ancestral. Our legacy: Māori rugby has a proud legacy that we want to acknowledge and continue.			
Our values	Rangatiratanga Kaitiakitanga Whanaungatanga	Taumatatanga Poutamatanga Tikanga Te Reo	Kotahitanga Manaakitanga	Wairuatanga Whakapapa
Pou 1: Tātakitanga (Leadership) / Uplift Māori leaders				
Build eminence within the NZR system, to achieve our cultural, social and commercial objectives. To achieve this we will:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure diverse skills and knowledge within NZMRB and Regional Māori Boards• Implement a stakeholder partnership model to engage with iwi/Māori leadership• Increase strategic presence in NZR, as well as explore other opportunities for regional and global presence				
Pou 2: Puawaitanga (Achievement) / Enhance Māori through rugby				
Develop opportunities for Māori in rugby to strive and achieve. To achieve this we will:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide quality events and innovative initiatives• Create transparent pathways to higher performance• Identify talent for all rugby roles• Realise the value of Māori and Māori rugby commercially and culturally				
Pou 3: Hauoratanga / Promote holistic wellbeing				
Raise awareness of the importance of holistic wellbeing in and through rugby. To achieve this we will:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transform rugby to be more welcoming for Māori (home away from home)• Ensure we have the structures/people to carry out wellbeing initiatives for Māori• Utilise Māori health and wellbeing models and frameworks (e.g., Whare Tapa Wha)• Encourage whakapapa and tikanga-centric initiatives across the system• Increase Māori presence in digital spaces and places to promote wellbeing				
Pou 4: Angitutanga / Uplift Māori lives				
Create opportunities and build capacity through rugby for our communities and people. To achieve this we will:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop opportunities to grow Māori leaders• Create transformative, whanau-focused and community initiatives• Identify strategic relationships and opportunities with wider Māori stakeholders				

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There are a large range of documents, data and insights that were reviewed and considered in the development of this W&G in Rugby System Strategy. The following is a list of the more significant ones, although this list is not exhaustive.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to all those who shared their time and insights to inform and guide the authors in the development of this system strategy - a multitude of stakeholders from across the rugby system, within rugby delivery organisations and beyond, and a range of stakeholders from communities across New Zealand.

The map is surrounded by logos for regional rugby unions and national teams. The regional unions are arranged as follows:

- North Harbour**, **Counties Manukau**, **Waikato**
- Taranaki**, **King Country**, **Bay of Plenty**
- Whanganui**, **Horowhenua-Kapiti**, **Tasman**
- West Coast**, **Buller**
- Southland**
- Northland**, **Auckland Rugby Auckland**, **Thames Valley**
- East Coast**, **Poverty Bay**, **Hawke's Bay**
- Manawatu**, **Wairarapa Bush**, **Wellington**
- Canterbury**, **Mid Canterbury**, **South Canterbury**
- North Otago**, **Otago**

Below the map are logos for national teams and other organizations:

- BLUES**, **CHIEFS MANAWA**, **CHIEFS**, **CRUSADERS**, **HIGHLANDERS**, **HURRICANES**, **POUA**, **MATATU**
- New Zealand Māori Rugby Board**, **PACIFIC ADVISORY GROUP**, **WIRA WOMEN IN RUGBY - AOTEAROA -**

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