

NEW ZEALAND WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY SYSTEM STRATEGY 2023-2033 NZR ACTION PLAN 2024



For more information, visit www.nzrugby.co.nz/womenandgirls



NZR ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

The planned investment across women and girls rugby is \$24.8m for 2024, up by \$2.9m on 2023.

In 2024, NZR continues to lead the New Zealand rugby community's change journey.

Foundational changes introduced in the 2023 Action Plan continue alongside new initiatives to build a strong, supportive system and work towards the long-term vision of rugby as a game for all. 2024 features a new expanded Super Rugby Aupiki (SRA) competition, three domestic tests for the Black Ferns, and the Black Ferns Sevens team heading to the Paris Olympics – a pinnacle event in the international rugby calendar. In the women's game, the 2025 Rugby World Cup in England, the first British and Irish Lions tour of New Zealand in 2027, and the 2028 Olympics are key performance milestones on the horizon. An ongoing focus on planning, monitoring and review will ensure the Strategy remains relevant and able to continue delivering positive impacts for women and girls (W&G) in 2025 and beyond.

In 2024, the Community Rugby team within NZR will continue to partner directly with rugby organisations across Aotearoa to support and review their individual progress against the building blocks of the Strategy. The Future of Rugby Clubs project will see the inclusion of minimum standards to provide guidance on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment and fit-for-purpose facilities. Community Guidelines for W&G, developed alongside Provincial Union (PU) representatives, will advise on standard participation and competition pathways that meet the needs of women and girls. New technology will support improved data capture and analysis to guide future planning.

Wāhine-specific programmes and resources underway this year include:

- Supporting young women joining contact (tackle) forms of rugby
- Warm up injury prevention programme
- Non-contact offerings, like World Rugby's T1 format
- Ako Wāhine coaching education and network
- 'Rugby 101' primers, and development, support and pathways for female referees
- Women's health and wellbeing education
- Support for female coaches and/or those coaching women and girls
- Activation events that encourage girls and young women to sample rugby

Diversity in governance and leadership is key to the game's long-term strength and appeal. NZR is committed to both maintaining its own diversity commitments and supporting PUs to develop and progress their own plans to achieve Board diversity targets.

A comprehensive new women's high-performance plan, developed in 2023, aims to build common pathways for players, to thrive and excel, and further support the Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens to consistently perform at their best on the international stage. The plan will be implemented over four years and spans wellbeing, athlete development, performance support, training, competitions and innovation to ensure investment and resources are best targeted to support the women's game. The plan also incorporates recommendations for NZR's response to the Black Ferns Cultural & Environmental Review (2021), which focuses on implementing standard policies, processes and procedures, building management capability, and enhanced on- and off-field support for contracted players while celebrating our unique culture and heritage.

The Black Ferns, and their new expanded coaching and management team, have a busy match calendar in 2024 with the Pacific 4 tournament and O'Reilly Cup played here and Australia, a test match at Twickenham, the WXV tournament in November as well as planning and preparation underway for the 2025 Rugby World Cup. The Black Ferns Sevens' SVNS World Series is followed by the Olympics in July.

SRA relaunched in an expanded format for 2024, with more players contracted for a longer season and pre-season based at regional hubs. A review of women's domestic competitions, covering the Farah Palmer Cup (FPC), domestic Sevens, and development pathways, environments and support structures, aims to provide clear alignment across the system for implementation from 2025.

This expanded SRA format also supports wider opportunities in brand and marketing, fan engagement and commercial development. NZR will look to partner with SR clubs on strategy, bringing out the best of local, and building commercial capability across the system to keep up with the rapidly evolving game.

Strategy Focus Areas

A	CULTURE	An open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby
B	SYSTEM	Focused rugby system collaboration, 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

2024 ACTIONS

Strategy Focus Area and Building Blocks	2024 Commitment
A CULTURE	
A1.2 Enforce baseline member protection standards to keep W&G safe in all rugby environments.	Deliver targeted improvements to rugby safeguarding and protection policies, systems, knowledge and safety awareness in the rugby community e.g. Safe Kids Advisor, <u>Safer Communities</u> and <u>RugbySmart injury prevention programmes</u> .
A1.3 Use quotas throughout the rugby system to drive significant increase in numbers and inclusion of diverse women in governance.	Support PUs to meet all-of-system governance diversity targets of 33% women and 50% overall diversity, as part of <u>NZR's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy</u> .
	Meet NZR's commitment as a member of Global Women's 'Champions for Change' to a ratio of 40% female:40% male:20% any gender, at each level of the organisation.
	Maintain at least 40% female representation on the NZR board in line with our commitments in the NZR Board Diversity Action Plan, NZR's partnership with Global Women, and the <u>Sport NZ Gender Equity</u> policy; also as a key <u>organisational performance measure</u> .
A1.7 Support development and pathways for diverse female leaders across rugby.	Within NZR, review pay equity, and implement action plan and ongoing framework, as part of <u>NZR's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy</u> .
	Deliver and review the inaugural NZR Women in Rugby Governance & Mentorship Programme and Peer Mentoring Programme and provide recommendations for future programmes.
A2.1 Collaborate on a shift and alignment of W&G branding that engages and connects W&G in rugby.	Align women's branding and marketing to build match attendance and merchandising across <u>Black Ferns</u> , <u>Super Rugby Aupiki</u> and <u>Farah Palmer Cup</u> .
A2.2 Use storytelling to raise visibility around diverse W&G journeys in rugby.	Showcase grassroots women's rugby on screen with domestic games shown free-to-air and Black Ferns games live on TikTok.
A2.3 Facilitate governance training and resources that lift the quality of rugby governance.	Deliver a programme to develop and support governance and leadership capability among PU CEOs and senior leaders
A2.5 Understand and enhance the positive impacts of Māori and Pacific Peoples' cultural practices on inclusion and engagement of W&G in rugby.	Complete an assessment of activities in the sector that promote positive outcomes for Pasifika in rugby, and recommend resources to bridge identified gaps and build capability (as part of the implementation of phase 1 of the <u>NZR Pasifika Strategy 2024-2029</u>).

Strategy Focus Area and Building Blocks	2024 Commitment
B SYSTEM	
B1.1 Demonstrate intentional leadership of W&G rugby nationally and regionally.	Partner with Provincial Unions on their self-assessment, planning and activity for W&G, and on NZR projects that impact W&G in community rugby.
	NZR Women and Girls Programme Group meeting regularly to oversee delivery of the Strategy, 2024 Action Plan, and plan for 2025 onwards.
B1.4 Identify W&G local community rugby needs and minimum standards (i.e. Club Review).	Confirm a set of minimum club standards, understand what clubs need to achieve them, and develop simple guidelines for clubs to ensure their facilities are welcoming, inclusive and fit-for-purpose for all (under the <u>Future of Rugby Clubs review</u>).
	Develop Community Guidelines on W&G Products and Pathways - a standard offering of participation and competition pathways for W&G that meets their needs and enables seamless movement between settings, for implementation from 2025.
B2.2 Enhance rugby system partnering, investment and accountability for mutually beneficial W&G outcomes.	Continue to work with our partners (Sky, ACC, Sport NZ, Te Aka Whai Ora/ the Māori Health Authority, Movember and others) to deliver targeted, effective training and education to the wider rugby community.
	Partner with individual PUs on W&G initiatives and bespoke support towards their plans to achieve PU Board and diversity targets.
	Maintain transparency by tracking and reporting total annual investment in W&G rugby.
B2.3 Implement a risk reward approach to motivate delivery against W&G targets.	Review existing PU Relationship Agreements, Funding and Policy (including consultation on developing a new risk/reward framework) in 2024/2025 ahead of new agreement from 2026.
B2.4 Upskill and empower community rugby people to deliver inclusive and engaging community rugby.	Develop sustainable training and education practices - IT toolkits, train-the-trainer concepts and an appropriate content platform that suits the intended audience.
B2.5 Review progress against W&G strategy and implementation outcomes and update priorities and targets.	Report on progress against the 2023 NZR W&G Action Plan as part of the 2023 <u>NZR Annual Report</u> ; Produce the 2024 NZR W&G Action Plan; and define measures of overall Strategy progress and impact.
B3.1 Enable community rugby through technology resources and support.	Implement new technology to better support information sharing and management of registration, injury and learning data from 2025.

Strategy Focus Area and Building Blocks	2024 Commitment
C PARTICIPATION	
C1.1 <i>Shift to PU-led model and regional and local delivery roles and responsibilities agreed to drive high quality experiences.</i>	<p>Partner with PUs on a range of activator programmes to continue to support growth in registered W&G players.</p> <p>Develop sustainable training and education practices - IT toolkits, train-the-trainer concepts and an appropriate content platform that suits the intended audience (see Future of Rugby Clubs review).</p>
C1.2 <i>Delivery of athlete skill-build and injury prevention programmes for safe and confident entry or transition into tackle rugby for 11-18+ year olds.</i>	<p>Develop a centralised programme (with implementation guidelines) to build skills and confidence in girls and young women joining contact rugby.</p>
E1.2 <i>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).</i>	
C1.3 <i>Increase girls-only non-contact offerings (e.g. Rip) for 11-12 year olds that fit player numbers.</i>	<p>Development and testing of a national non-contact game variant based on <u>World Rugby's T1 format</u> with guidelines for girls' rugby.</p>
C1.4 <i>Increase mixed or girls-only tackle offerings for 11-12 year olds that consider adolescence factors and fit player numbers.</i>	
C1.5 <i>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.</i>	

Strategy Focus Area and Building Blocks	2024 Commitment
D PERFORMANCE	
D1.1 Review and develop a planned approach to W&G competitions, performance and high-performance pathways (e.g. Women's HP Plan).	Complete a review of women's domestic competitions (FPC, development pathways, environments and support structures; Sevens competitions and pathways) for 2025.
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).	Design a national Talent Framework that incorporates player selection criteria and an identification structure with job descriptions for key personnel, as part of the Women's High Performance Plan.
D1.4 Source and share W&G commercial insights.	Confirm domestic commercial strategy, identify target categories and brands, and secure renewals of preferred domestic partners.
D1.5 Source and share W&G fan engagement & brand insights.	Build a set of consistent and comprehensive commercial data that includes women's-specific measures.
	Review Black Ferns, Black Ferns Sevens and other women's brands as part of a wider Research and Insights initiative.
D3.1 Implement more strategically balanced W&G competitions, and performance and high-performance pathways (i.e. HP, commercial and fan).	Deliver first season of new extended Super Rugby Aupiki format and incorporate review feedback into planning for 2026 onwards.
	Successfully deliver three domestic Black Ferns test matches in 2024 and use lessons learned in planning for future games.
D3.2 Further develop W&G high performance opportunities and environments to enhance W&G ability to win with mana.	Progress implementation of NZR's <u>Black Ferns Review</u> response by developing policies around transitioning players between settings, and implementing processes to share and address safety concerns.
	Deliver tailored <u>Mind.Set.Engage</u> mental health and wellbeing workshops to Super Rugby Aupiki teams.
	Complete and roll out the Female Athlete Education Programme and resources on preventing injury through coaching.

Strategy Focus Area and Building Blocks	2024 Commitment
E TRANSITIONS	
E1.1 Source and facilitate training on the key differences around coaching and managing W&G (i.e. hauora, psychosocial, physiological, cultural).	Develop resources to support safe and enhanced experiences for women and girls in rugby, including practical skills and tools for coaches at all levels in catering for diverse players, and direct-to-player education.
	Warm Up programme: Develop and trial a women and girls-specific warmup programme to reduce injuries.
	Review and update the <u>Ako Wāhine</u> programme to continue to support both coaching of women and girls, and women moving into coaching roles.
	Create (and begin implementation of) a new Women's Health and Wellbeing Education Module
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.	Continue to partner with PUs on activation events for girls and young women with NZR ' <u>Strengthen and Adapt</u> ' project funding from Sport NZ.
E1.4 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on how to run high quality inclusive rugby experiences for diverse W&G (safety, environment, culture, training).	Run women's development programmes (age-group, Māori and/or specialist) as required for 2024.
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).	Women-specific resources: Coaching development resources created to support enhanced and safe experiences specifically for W&G in rugby, and ensure coaches (at all levels) have the practical tools to cater for diverse participants, as well as direct-to-player education.
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.	Rugby 101 & Women's Only <u>Intro to Refereeing Courses</u> - Update and deliver webinars on the basics of rugby to Heartland clubs, and provide support and resources to NPC unions to run their own.
	Update and distribute training resources on the 'Art of Refereeing W&G' to community referees.
E3.3 Develop and support W&G talented coach & referees to transition from community to performance and high performance.	Build in development support for women referees to move from Community to the Development/Performance space.
	Deliver, review and update the High-Performance Coach Development Programme.