

RUGBY FOR LIFE®

CHARITABLE TRUST

2026

Q1 REVIEW



Whānau and friends of Rugby for Life,

Quarter one of 2026 has been a busy and productive period for our clubs, committees, and volunteers following a well-deserved summer break. Many of our Rugby for Life communities have faced significant challenges due to recent weather events. Ōakura, home to the Whangaruru Club, was particularly impacted. It was encouraging to see the community come together in response, with local support and senior players assisting to clear roads - demonstrating resilience, unity, and a strong commitment to one another during a time of need. Meaningful community engagement has remained a priority throughout the offseason, ensuring our club whānau and wider communities stay connected and active. With summer sports now concluded, winter sport is in full swing. A significant amount of preparation has gone into fielding teams and securing coaches and managers—not only for rugby, but also for league and netball. We wish all teams and participants the very best for the season ahead. Across the network, strong funding outcomes exceeding \$150,000 have been achieved through a combination of grants, council funding, fundraising initiatives, and sponsorship. These contributions are vital, and we are pleased to see infrastructure upgrades about to commence at several clubs, supporting long-term sustainability for both clubs and their communities.

Looking ahead, the New Zealand Parliamentary Team will return to Russell on 26–27 June to face the Russell Sports Club/Rugby for Life Invitational team, who currently hold the trophy. The visiting side will arrive from Wellington eager to reclaim it - but we have other plans. With netball also featuring this year, the weekend promises to be another celebration of community sport and connection, with involvement from a number of New Zealand sporting personalities. As it is an election year, there will also be opportunities for meaningful kōrero with attending Members of Parliament. To our coordinators, club committees, and community volunteers; thank you for your continued commitment and collaboration in delivering positive outcomes. We also acknowledge that none of this would be possible without the ongoing support of our funders, sponsors, and donors. Your contribution enables the Rugby for Life kaupapa to grow, thrive, and make a lasting impact

Thank you for being part of this kaupapa.

Ngā mihi nui



Ajit Balsingham
Chair of the Board
Rugby for Life



BLUES CHARITABLE TRUST LEADERSHIP TRIP



Strengthening youth leadership development

For the third year running, Rugby for Life partnered with the Blues Charitable Trust to deliver an unforgettable leadership development experience for 33 rangatahi from across Northland.

From 13 to 15 March, students from Te Kura o Te Kao, Whangārei and the Kaipara region came together at Blues HQ in Auckland for two nights of connection, challenge and growth. Participants were primarily Year 12 rangatahi, with selected Year 11 and Year 13 students included in the 2026 intake. Importantly, participation was not limited to rugby players. This was about leadership, not just sport.



WHAT THE PROGRAMME DELIVERED

FRIDAY FOCUSED ON:

- Self-leadership and belonging
- Communication skills and understanding great leadership
- Watching the Warriors claim victory

SATURDAY BUILT DEPTH THROUGH:

- Overcoming challenges and resilience
- Attending the Blues Captain's Run
- High performing teams and leading others
- Wellbeing and nutrition workshops
- Career planning sessions
- Engagement with Blues players
- Dinner prepared by the Blues chef

SUNDAY COMPLETED THE EXPERIENCE WITH:

- The All Blacks Experience & Blues v Moana at Eden Park

Participants stayed at College Rifles accommodation for two nights, strengthening bonds across clubs and communities.

WHY IT MATTERS



This programme strengthens youth leadership development across our rugby clubs. It creates real connection between rangatahi from different regions and builds confidence for life after school.

Online learning modules will continue the journey, while a confirmed Northland reconnection visit in September will reinforce relationships. Year 13 participants will also transition into our Employment, Training and Education pathway, ensuring continuity of support.

LEADERSHIP GROWS THROUGH OPPORTUNITY.

EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING & EDUCATION **SNAPSHOT**

The Power of Connection to Our Clubs

Connection is currency and a young person's success in employment or education is directly linked to their connection to club and community. When engagement is strong, employment outcomes accelerate. When connection weakens, progress slows.

Our E,T&E programme anchors rangatahi to their rugby club from Year 9 through to adulthood, creating personalised pathways into employment, training and education.



2026 PARTNERSHIP GROWTH

Partnerships with **NPL** and **Manaia** Scaffolding opening doors to real industry experience, essential gear, and clear trade pathways

Keen to offer apprenticeships or work-experience?
Email matthew.d@rugbyforlife.org.nz

REFLECTING ON RECENT SUCCESS



1.

BY 31 MARCH, WE ACHIEVED:

71 total ETE outcomes, more than doubling our strategic target of 30

58 employment placements

- 27 through direct programme support
- 10 through the RFL network
- 21 through club-led initiatives
- 9 education placements
- 4 international leadership pathways through Sri Lanka

Hikurangi and Otamatea clubs alone supported **21 local people into employment**, highlighting the strength of our community-led model.



2.

GAINING MOMENTUM IN 2026

Early Wins

- 2 new job placements secured in April

Barrier Removal

- \$5,900 Barrier Fund now active
- Work boots supplied to a 16yo entering employment
- Direct support provided to Hikurangi players starting new roles

Visibility And Engagement

- ETE display boards installed at Onerahi, Maungatūroto, Hikurangi, Ruawai and Western Sharks



3.

2026 TO 2027 TARGETS

93 total ETE outcomes

73 employment outcomes

- 38 directly supported
- 35 club placements
20 education or training placements
- 15 directly supported
- 5 club supported
60 people supported directly through the programme

When rugby clubs lead employment pathways, communities thrive. The momentum is real and the opportunity ahead is significant.

ONERAHI LIGHTS UPGRADE

In 2024, Onerahi Rugby Club stood before Whangārei District Council to present a submission for upgraded lighting. The gallery was full. Community support was visible. **LEADERSHIP WAS STRONG.**



At the heart of this success was the leadership and persistence of the Rugby for Life Club Coordinator, Fiona Raymond. From navigating funding conversations to preparing the formal submission and standing to speak in council chambers, the coordinator drove the process with clarity and commitment. This outcome did not happen by chance. It happened through advocacy, relationship building and belief in what the community deserved.

The primary challenge came before the submission process. Funding pathways were complex, particularly as the club does not own the grounds. With strong coordination between the club, Rugby for Life and key partners, momentum built and confidence grew. The project is now fully funded by Whangārei District Council.

Impact Across the Community:

- Increased pride across all age groups
- First night game delivered unforgettable moments for tamariki
- Improved safety during training with full ground lighting
- Expanded capacity for future sporting and community events including matariki

A significant personal milestone for the coordinator was learning the council submission process and finding the confidence to speak publicly in support of the club. Leadership in action created lasting infrastructure for future generations.

This achievement reflects the collective effort of:

- Onerahi Rugby Committee
- Club members and the wider community for their strong support
- Whangārei District Council
- Darren James at Civil Hoskin
- The installation crew



**MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN.
WHEN COMMITTED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP MEETS OPPORTUNITY,
REAL CHANGE HAPPENS.**

CLUB IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

KEY CLUB

HIGHLIGHTS

SOUTHERN

- ✓ **COMMUNITY**
 - 4 students attended the RFL Blues Leadership weekend
 - Whānau day delivered with Te Kopuru Steering Group
 - Successful Netball Muster
- ✓ **FUNDRAISING**
 - \$14K for kitchen renovation
 - \$17K livestock income and sponsorship secured

RUAWAI

- ✓ **COMMUNITY**
 - Successful Rugby Muster
 - Senior team re-entered competition after 8 years
 - 2 students attended RFL Blues Leadership weekend
- ✓ **FUNDRAISING**
 - Full senior uniform through sponsorship and fundraising

SOUTHERN UNITED

- ✓ **FUNDRAISING**
 - \$3K raised for Heart Foundation
- ✓ **COMMUNITY COLLABORATION**
 - U15 & U18 aligned with Seniors to strengthen connection
 - Hosted 20 coaches - Rugby
 - Smart
 - Referee changing area upgraded
 - Coach Coordinator appointed



HIKURANGI

- ✓ **COMMUNITY**
 - Kitchen capacity expanded for revenue growth
 - New women's team entered 2026 competition
 - Hikurangi Sports Hub development underway
 - 2 students attended Blues Leadership Weekend
- ✓ **FUNDRAISING**
 - \$2K at Annual Golf Fundraiser

AUPOURI

- ✓ **COMMUNITY**
 - 4 rangatahi from Te Kura o Te Kao attended Blues Leadership weekend
 - Rangatahi Skills Day hosted 50 tamariki
 - 120 participants in annual New Year tournament
 - Senior team league collaboration formed

WHANGARURU

- ✓ **COMMUNITY**
 - 2 rangatahi attended Blues Leadership weekend
 - Deck extension and weatherproofing completed
 - Water safety day delivered for 20 tamariki
- ✓ **FUNDRAISING**
 - WDC Matariki funding confirmed
 - Senior players donated \$2K back to the club



\$158,349 RAISED
Across RFL Clubs

Grassroots fundraising, sponsorship and grants continue to drive sustainable community sport outcomes.



COMMUNITY SPORT
development is alive and growing across our network.



TO OUR FUNDERS, PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Your support strengthens Rugby for Life clubs and the communities around them.

With your backing, we are building more than teams. We are developing youth leadership, creating employment pathways, and supporting sustainable community sport environments across Northland.

Every dollar invested creates opportunity. Every partnership strengthens resilience. Every shared belief grows momentum.

The Quarter One results show what is possible when clubs lead and communities unite.

Thank you for standing alongside us. Your support fuels leadership, builds connections and strengthens long-term social impact through rugby.

Together, we are building strong communities.

Ngā mihi nui,
The Rugby for Life Team



RUGBY **FOR LIFE** CHARITABLE TRUST

**BACK OUR KAUPAPA
SCAN TO SUPPORT**



RUGBYFORLIFE.ORG.NZ