RUGBY FOR LIFE®
CHARITABLE TRUST

2025
Q1 REVIEW





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CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

As we look back on the first quarter of 2025, it's clear that Rugby for Life is stepping into a bold new chapter — one shaped by growth, momentum, and deeper impact.

What started as a grassroots initiative has become a powerful movement — reaching wider, going deeper, and creating meaningful change across the communities we're proud to serve

This quarter, we've seen the strength of our kaupapa shine:

- The Blues Leadership Trip inspired and lifted the aspirations of our rangatahi
- Our coordinators continue to grow in strength and capability
- Whānau-led programmes have brought life and connection to clubs and community spaces

Every milestone has been made possible by shared belief and relentless teamwork — from our amazing staff, our dedicated clubs, our supporting partners, and the passionate communities behind it all. To each of you — thank you.





We believe, more than ever, that sport is a powerful driver for equity, leadership and connection. It opens doors, brings people together, and shows our young people that they matter — their voice, their presence, and their future.
Our commitment to this kaupapa is strong: to back lives, build leaders, strengthen communities, and champion equity — through sport.

Ngā mihi nui,

Ajit Balsingham
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
RUGBY FOR LIFE



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SOCIAL IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Youth Development

30 rangatahi took part in a powerful two-day Blues Leadership Trip, connecting across 10 clubs to explore what leadership truly means. The programme focused on helping each young person discover their unique skill set, supported by practical tools and guidance to shape their individual career pathways. It was a hands-on experience built on growth, connection and long-term impact.

Kōkiritia has launched at Onerahi, driven by the dedication of Fiona Raymond, with a strong focus on engaging youth through a cultural lens. This kaupapa is designed to build confidence, skills, and knowledge in a space that is safe, inclusive and empowering. Every Thursday, Onerahi hosts a tamariki kaupapa for the children of our senior men's and women's teams. Activities include learning Māori games, waiata, haka, creative arts and crafts, movies, and shared meals. It's a space where tamariki are supported and cared for, allowing whānau to fully participate while knowing their children are in good hands.







At Aupōuri, the club proudly fielded four full JMB teams, showing strong community support and engagement. This milestone aligns perfectly with their commitment to sustainable growth, proving that when a community stands together, long-term success and development follow.

- Community Empowerment Coordinators from across the region came together in March for the RFL Workshop, gaining new skills and building capacity to strengthen their impact back in their communities. This investment in leadership continues to drive positive change on the ground.
- Whānau-focused events were delivered across multiple clubs, guided by the unique needs of each community. These gatherings created safe, welcoming spaces that celebrated connection, culture, and belonging, reminding us that when we centre our whānau, strong communities follow.
- Local activations, such as Muster and Rally Days, brought great energy as clubs kicked off the season. These events helped bring players, families, and volunteers together, setting a strong foundation for the months ahead.
- Ōhaeawai are laying the groundwork for a thriving junior club, with strong local momentum. For the past month, RFL Coordinator Aimee Ruka has been walking tamariki from school to training every Thursday, ensuring they have a safe and supported way to participate. It's real care, real commitment, and it's already making a difference.
- Roxanne Kelly and the team at Southern RFC hosted a powerful community dinner with FMG, drawing in 110 locals for a night of connection and celebration. Featured on Country Calendar, the event reflected the heart of what community sport can achieve when the right people come together.
- Southern United RFC (Tokoroa) have partnered with Reconex to deliver kaupapa that support local rangatahi. Reconex works directly with youth who have left school or experienced challenges, equipping them with essential life skills, support to gain licences, and pathways forward. The club provides their space at no cost, ensuring each session is inclusive and accessible.

These moments aren't just wins for individual clubs – they're reminders of what's possible when we lead with purpose and stay grounded in our communities. Together, we're building a game and a movement that welcomes everyone.

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CLUB INFRASTRUCTURE

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Over $150,000 secured in confirmed grant funding across RFL-affiliated clubs – a huge achievement driven by strong community effort, clear vision, and collective action.

WHANGARURU

Received $48,485 to build new deck extensions, creating more functional and welcoming spaces for whānau and supporters.

KAEO

Secured over $42,000 to upgrade their club's roof, ensuring the facilities are safe, secure, and ready to support the next generation.

HIKURANGI

Raised $8,743 through their successful Golf Day fundraiser – a shining example of how local fundraising events can drive real outcomes when the community gets behind them.





These wins reflect the power of community-led initiatives backed by a clear kaupapa. Every dollar earned or granted helps create better spaces, stronger connections, and more opportunity for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau across the region. This is what progress looks like when we work together

FUNDING & RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Over 36 funding applications have been submitted across the RFL Network, backing infrastructure, projects, and community-led sustainability. Clubs are showing real innovation in fundraising, with creative efforts like hangi nights, online stores, and scrap metal donations. Clubs such as Ruawai and Onerahi are leading successful peer-to-peer campaigns, raising funds for overseas trips and rangatahi-focused programmes.



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CLUB INFRASTRUCTURE

CULTURAL IDENTITY & WHANAUNGATANGA



Waiata, haka, and Mau Rākau/Patu are being woven into team and community sessions—offering deeply meaningful, respectful, and inclusive ways to connect.

Southern RFC delivered a powerful blend of men's wellbeing wānanga and haka learning sessions. Across the network, clubs are building cultural confidence and intergenerational pride.

LOCAL INNOVATION & INCLUSION

Maungaturoto provided equal gear packs for all juniors, building unity and club pride. Ruawai's scrap metal donation programme brought the community together while drawing in future sponsors. Otamatea's women's team reached record participation through shared networks—showing what's possible when communities rally behind inclusion.

REAL VOICES, REAL IMPACT

"We've seen real success in our junior space this season... Strong player numbers, committed coaches, and returning whānau."
Bryar, Aupōuri RFC

"This season has been hours and hours on the ground... but we're seeing the fruits in community pride."
Aimee, Taiamai Ohaeawai RFC

"Providing kids with matching gear made everyone feel included. The parents were so grateful — it brought the club together."
Chantelle, Maungaturoto RFC

From the Far North to Tokoroa, our clubs are united by purpose and people.

These stories show that real impact doesn't come from the top down — it's built from the ground up through trusted relationships, local leadership, and a shared belief in what's possible.

NORTHLAND RUGBY UNION PARTNERSHIP

NORTHLAND RUGBY UNION (NRU) – SHARED VISION, SHARED ACTION

RFL and NRU renewed our commitment to working collaboratively toward a shared vision; building stronger communities through sport. Both parties have aligned around key goals including deeper engagement with clubs, coordinated leadership pathways, and a unified voice for community transformation.





BLUES
LEADERSHIP TRIP

In April, 30 rangatahi from 10 different clubs across Northland participated in the inaugural Blues Leadership Trip — a transformative experience designed to build leadership capability, cultural confidence, and long-term aspiration in our youth. Hosted at the Blues HQ in Auckland, the programme included workshops, team-building, cultural sessions, and volunteer leadership at Eden Park. The experience concluded with a powerful visit to The All Blacks Experience — reinforcing the legacy, values, and potential of Aotearoa's sporting elite.

Rugby for Life extends our heartfelt thanks to Ian Jones, The Blues Charitable Trust, Rob Woodley, Andrew Hore, Rosie Nathan, Harrison Sanders, and the entire team at The All Blacks Experience.



Some of the wonderful feedback we received:

"It was a meke weekend. For our kids in the North, this is a big deal... Being part of something like this inspires them to strive for greatness."
Conrad, Parent

"This leadership course showed me what professional athletes do to maintain high standards. Touring Blues HQ and meeting others was a highlight."
Participant

"The manaakitanga shown by your group touched us deeply – your rangatahi truly embodied the principle of sweeping the shed."
BCT Facilitator



RFL & NZ UNIVERSITIES RUGBY
CAPTAINS LONG LUNCH FUNDRAISER

A GAME-CHANGING KICK-OFF



We're proud to announce a powerful step forward in our journey — the launch of a transformational partnership between RFL and New Zealand Universities Rugby (NZU). This collaboration is grounded in a shared belief: that sport is a platform for leadership, education, and social mobility.

This was an ambitious event that exceeded all expectations and set a bold new standard for collaboration, storytelling, and impact-driven fundraising.

Held on Auckland's North Shore, the event brought together leaders across sport, business, philanthropy, and community — raising $100,000 in support of shared kaupapa around community, grassroots rugby, education, equity, and leadership.

A Shared Kaupapa, A Bold Outcome

Our first major initiative together — the Captains Long Lunch Fundraiser — wasn't just an event; it was a statement of intent. Held at Auckland's North Shore Rugby Club, the day brought together leaders from sport, business, philanthropy, and local communities to champion equity, education, grassroots rugby, and leadership.
The result? $100,000 raised, national visibility, and a renewed sense of purpose across the rugby landscape.

Outcomes That Matter

This was about far more than figures on a scoreboard. The Long Lunch delivered meaningful outcomes that will shape the future:

- Reinvigorated networks and long-standing relationships
- Featured on TVNZ 1News, bringing our kaupapa into homes across Aotearoa (See Video)
- The rugby community — from legends to rising stars — stood united in pride
- Strong political support with Mayor Wayne Brown and Minister Shane Jones present
- Deep authenticity through shared stories, club pride, and cultural identity

Partnership with Potential

The event marked the beginning of a values-aligned relationship between RFL and NZU Rugby — a partnership built on vision, collaboration, and action. The Long Lunch was proof of what's possible when we come together with purpose. This is just the beginning, and the road ahead is full of opportunity. If you're passionate about community, equity, and the power of sport to make a difference, you're already part of this journey.

Let's build it together.







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COORDINATOR WORKSHOP

RFL COORDINATOR WORKSHOP 2025: STRONGER TOGETHER

On 22 March, eleven of our Club Coordinators gathered in Whangārei for the 2025 RFL Coordinator Workshop — a full-day wānanga designed to strengthen connection, capability, and alignment across our nationwide network.

This was more than just a meeting — it was a moment to refocus, reconnect, and re-energise the people delivering impact in our communities every day.

What the Day Looked Like

Hosted at McKay Stadium, the day opened with a warm welcome from leadership, followed by an agenda rich in collaboration and insight. The workshop covered:

- Vision and strategic direction for 2025
- Revised expectations and reporting structures
- Community-led storytelling and experience sharing
- Interactive planning around support gaps and resourcing
- Presentations from Foundation North and Department of Internal Affairs
- Guest insights from Roxanne (community-led initiatives), Delwyn (Funding process and opportunity) and Darlene (funding partnerships)

The workshop ended with a shared dinner at Pure Bar & Grill, celebrating the people behind the mahi and supporting grassroots businesses that uplift our kaupapa.

WHY IT MATTERED

Beyond logistics and planning, the workshop reinforced what makes our coordinator network so special: deep connection, community insight, and shared belief in the power of sport. It was also the first time many new faces — including Doug, Keri, Megan, and Katie — met their peers in person, creating instant bonds.

The space allowed coordinators to share openly, identify common barriers, and learn from one another — building a sense of momentum and clarity heading into the season.

RFL is only as strong as the people delivering on the ground. This workshop was a reminder that when we come together — with vision, support, and shared values — we go further, faster.



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A SINCERE THANK YOU

To Our Sponsors, Partners, Funders, and Supporters

Your belief in our kaupapa and continued investment in our communities is what powers Rugby for Life. Because of you, we're able to walk alongside our clubs, coordinators, rangatahi, and whānau across Aotearoa — building a future where sport is a platform for growth, connection, and opportunity.

Whether it's through funding, guidance, resources, or a shared commitment to equity and impact, your support ensures that the work we do is not only possible — but deeply meaningful, lasting, and felt across generations.

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