



Disability Inclusion Fund

2025 Impact Report

Introduction

In 2019, Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa launched the Disability Plan, which included funding to help bring the plan to life. One of the plan's key commitments was to invest in partnerships, programmes and funds that support disabled tamariki and rangatahi to be active.

To help deliver on this commitment, the Disability Inclusion Fund was created in 2021 with a \$3.6 million investment. The fund was designed to improve the quality and equity of participation opportunities for disabled tamariki and rangatahi, especially those with intellectual or invisible impairments. It also aimed to promote inclusive practices and build long-term capability across the sector, helping to create lasting change.

This commitment continues in Sport NZ's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, which identifies disabled tamariki and rangatahi as a priority population, ensuring they have more opportunities to participate and better experiences in play, active recreation and sport.



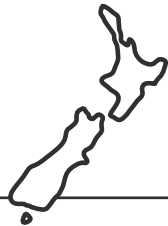
Photo credit: Parafed Bay of Plenty

Successful fund recipients

Sport NZ opened a contestable application process to organisations that could show how they would meet the goals of the Disability Inclusion Fund.

There were 81 applications from a wide range of organisations, both existing partners and new applicants, requesting a total of \$12.6 million. This strong response showed the sector's commitment to inclusion.

16 organisations selected



\$3.6 million allocated



Sixteen organisations were selected to receive funding, with a total of \$3.6 million allocated. Each project received between \$30,000 and \$300,000 for initiatives running over 2 or 3 years, starting in early 2022 and finishing in mid-2025.

The 16 funded projects were:



Active

Making Auckland the World's Most Active City



Athletics NZ

Disability Inclusion Action Plan



Basketball Hawke's Bay

Disability and Inclusion Development Officer



Boccia NZ

Inclusive, Sustainable, Progressive



Canoe Racing NZ

Paddle-ability



Golf NZ

Disability Action Plan



Netball NZ

No Limits Netball



NZ Riding for the Disabled

Improving Access to Play, Active Recreation, and Sport for Disabled People Nationwide via Therapeutic Horse Riding



Parafed Bay of Plenty

Positive Play Experiences for Physically Disabled Tamariki



Parafed Northland

Mid North Active Inclusion: Leadership and Aspirations through Play, Active Recreation and Sport



Recreation Aotearoa

Accessible Active Recreation



Sense Rugby NZ

Sustainability Initiative



Sport Hawke's Bay

Disability Inclusion Initiative



Sport Otago

Interactive Learning and Play Lab



Swimming NZ

Swimming Inclusivity Plan



YMCA Southland

Ladders: Supporting Young People with Safe and Inclusive Opportunities to Recreate

Read more about each project on the [Sport NZ website](#).

Reach of the Disability Inclusion Fund

The Disability Inclusion Fund had wide reach and impact across the play, active recreation and sport sector. Funding helped these organisations develop inclusive practices to better support disabled people.

Organisations supported

5 National Sport Organisations

1 Regional Sport Organisation

2 Regional Sports Trusts

1 National Recreation Organisation

1 Regional Recreation Organisation

3 National Disability Sport Organisations

2 Regional Disability Sport Organisations

Activities supported

2 focused on play

3 focused on active recreation

8 focused on sport

3 focused on inclusionary practices



Outcomes and impact

Increased participation

The Disability Inclusion Fund supported a wide range of initiatives that increased participation for disabled tamariki and rangatahi. These can be grouped into 4 key areas:

1. New roles created to drive inclusion

These roles helped organisations expand their reach and deliver more inclusive opportunities:

Boccia NZ

Role created

Sport Development Lead

Impact summary

Increased participation from 83 to 161 participants and expanded delivery from 8 to 12 regions. The role enabled a more coordinated and inclusive approach to boccia nationwide.

[Read the story](#)

Sense Rugby NZ

Role created

General Manager

Impact summary

Expanded delivery from 8 to 15 locations across Aotearoa. Participant numbers grew from 400 to 643, with stronger systems and sustainability in place.

[Read the story](#)

NZ Riding for the Disabled

Role created

Roving Coach

Impact summary

Supported RDA groups to include riders with high support needs. Coaches and volunteers reported increased confidence and improved session quality.

Parafed Northland

Role created

Inclusion Coordinator (Far North)

Impact summary

Strengthened local presence in the Far North, increasing Halberg Games participation and enabling more regional events and programmes.

[Read the story](#)

“It has been incredibly rewarding to see the feedback from coaches and volunteers on the impact of our Roving Coach on their day-to-day service provision to our high and complex needs riders. Their increased skills and learning translated into confidence on the ground, increasing the quality of the riding sessions.”

Donna Kennedy
Chief Executive, New Zealand Riding for the Disabled

2. Partnerships with schools

These organisations brought inclusive play and sport directly into classrooms:

Basketball Hawke's Bay

School engagement

Delivered 48 training sessions across 6 schools, engaging 84 disabled rangatahi.

Impact summary

Culminated in a mini competition between schools, building confidence and connection through sport.

Parafed Bay of Plenty

School engagement

FLIPA (Fun Learning through Inclusive Play Activators) programme in 30 schools.

Impact summary

Reached 250 tamariki (70% disabled). Teachers reported increased creativity and inclusion in classroom play.

Sport Otago

School engagement

Delivered Play Lab to 15 schools.

Impact summary

340 disabled students participated alongside their peers. The programme integrated movement into everyday learning.

[Watch the video](#)

Swimming NZ

School engagement

Ran 240 learn-to-swim sessions across 12 specialist schools.

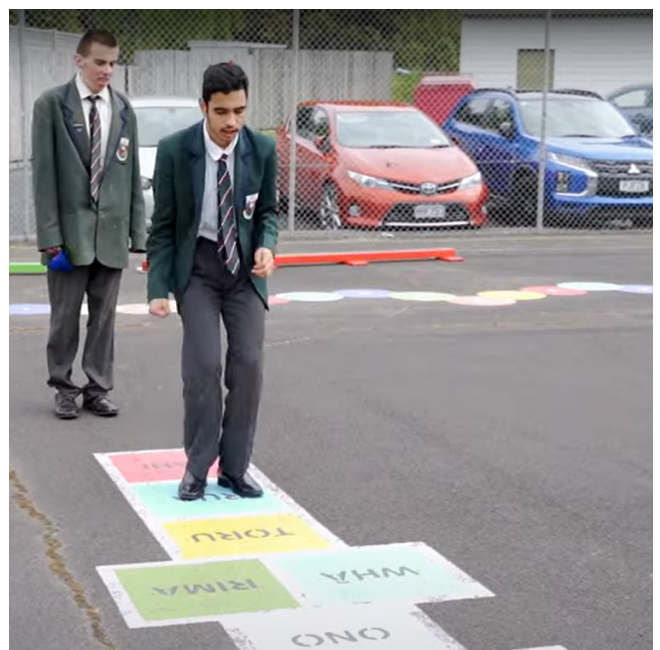
Impact summary

Improved water safety and confidence for disabled tamariki, with strong school engagement.

[Read the story](#)

“ Play Lab is a tool for teachers, teacher aides, learning assistants and students to learn through movement. It’s about making sure learning happens, but through play. Students learn best when they’re moving and when they’re happy and enjoying what they’re doing. ”

Kate Mossman
Former Physical Literacy and
Inclusion Advisor, Sport Otago



3. Partnerships with clubs and centres

These organisations created inclusive experiences in community settings:

Athletics NZ

Community engagement

Held 13 regional para-athletics events.

Impact summary

Engaged 192 disabled tamariki and rangatahi, introducing them to athletics in a supportive environment.

[Read the story](#)



Canoe Racing NZ

Community engagement

Delivered 81 PaddleAble sessions for disabled tamariki and rangatahi at 9 venues.

Impact summary

Engaged 119 disabled tamariki and rangatahi in PaddleAble sessions.

[Read the story](#)

Netball NZ

Community engagement

Supported 9 centres to deliver the No Limits Netball programme. Then another 3 centres joined the programme due to its success.

Impact summary

835 regular participants to part in No Limits Netball through the 12 Centres.

[Read the story](#)

Swimming NZ

Community engagement

Developed their Disability Swim Fund.
Held 33 regional swim clinics.

Impact summary

334 disabled participants received funding for swimming lessons.
445 disabled participants attended over the 33 clinics.

“ It was important for Netball NZ that the No Limits programme was locally led, as each centre is best placed to respond to the unique needs of their participants. With so many variables across the disability community, no two programmes look the same, and that’s exactly how each centre catered for their own community. ”

Irene van Dyk
Participation Manager, Netball NZ

4. Programme development

These organisations created tailored, inclusive programmes:

Golf NZ

Programme highlight

Created 6 All Abilities Hubs.

Impact summary

Over 60 regular participants in the programme.

Programme highlight

Developed an All Abilities Championships.

Impact summary

Participation in the All Abilities Championships has grown 20% year-on-year since 2022 and over 60 disabled golfers are now registered with an European Disabled Golf Association (EDGA) pass.

[Watch the video](#)



YMCA Southland

Programme highlight

Launched the [Y Not Squad](#) in October 2023.

Impact summary

18 disabled young people meet weekly for recreation and sport. The group formed a football team and entered a local junior summer league.



Photo credit: YMCA Southland

Increased system capability

Other initiatives focused on strengthening the sector's capability to support inclusion long-term. These can be grouped into 3 key areas:

1. Disability awareness and inclusion training

Many organisations delivered training to improve understanding of disability and inclusion across the sector. Others delivered training within their own organisations. These efforts helped build confidence, skills and inclusive practices among coaches, teachers and staff.

Aktive

What was delivered

Staff and investment partner training.

Impact summary

Increased participation opportunities for disabled tamariki and rangatahi, reflected in a rise in Tū Manawa disability-related applications.

“The Inclusion Training Programme has built confidence, capability, and knowledge. This has resulted in increased inclusive practices across Auckland, improved workforce capability to support and embed adaptive programmes into varied workstreams, and greater intentional collaboration and co-design with disability sport and recreation providers to deliver adaptive events across the region.”

Jennah Wootten
Chief Executive, Aktive



Photo credit: Canoe Racing NZ

Athletics NZ

What was delivered

Athletics NZ Inclusion Course and Halberg Foundation athletics-specific workshops. Also ran World Para Athletics (WPA) international, national and regional officials training.

Impact summary

Over 550 teachers, coaches and officials trained. 22 officials passed WPA officiating courses.

Golf NZ

What was delivered

All-Abilities programme embedded into PGA training.

Impact summary

80 PGA trainees completed training. 15 delivered 6-week practical sessions at the All-Abilities Hub at Golf Warehouse Ellerslie.

Canoe Racing NZ

What was delivered

12 PaddleAble workshops.

Impact summary

67 Participants with 49 having completed both PaddleAble Part 1 (theory) and Part 2 (Practical).

New Zealand Riding for the Disabled

What was delivered

64 in-person training workshops and 32 webinars.

Impact summary

Reached 1,186 coaches and volunteers with workshops. Webinars were viewed 1,368 times.

Parafed Bay of Plenty

What was delivered

Online training resources to support the FLIPA programme.

Impact summary

196 people trained online to support inclusive play.

Sport Hawke's Bay

What was delivered

8 Adapt and Include workshops in partnership with Halberg Foundation, Special Olympics NZ and Blind Sport NZ.

Impact summary

Over 150 attendees from schools, regional sports organisations, councils and physical activity providers trained.

[Read the story](#)

What was delivered

Maintained a dedicated Disability Advisor role.

Impact summary

Ensured inclusion was embedded across all programmes and events. Tū Manawa applications increased from 11 (2020) to 31 (2022) and 49 (2025).

Sport Otago

What was delivered

Play Lab and school resource development.

Impact summary

Integrated inclusive movement into everyday learning and supported schools with tailored, Ministry of Education-aligned resources.

Swimming NZ

What was delivered

Inclusive swim coaching training.

Impact summary

Over 500 coaches trained to support disabled swimmers.



Sense Rugby NZ

What was delivered

Occupational therapy led training module.

Impact summary

Enhanced existing education with the development of an Aotearoa-specific training module.

2. Resources to support the sector

Several organisations created practical tools and resources to help others deliver inclusive play, active recreation and sport. These resources are already being used across the sector and, in some cases, influencing wider planning and infrastructure decisions.

Aktive

What was developed

Created an Inclusion Advisor (Disability) role to lead the development of the 'Understanding Disability Toolkit' and 'Accessible and Inclusive Physical Activity Guidelines'.

Impact summary

Provided practical guidance to support inclusive delivery across Auckland.

What was developed

Partnered with Skillet Assess Maps to pilot a [map of inclusive physical activity venues](#) in Auckland.

Impact summary

11 organisations and 38 venues involved. The map has been viewed over 2,500 times, with 84% of users returning to engage.

Athletics NZ

What was developed

Developed the [Para Athlete Handbook](#) and [Adaptive Run Jump Throw Coaching Resource](#) for parents, teachers and coaches.

Impact summary

Resources help adapt athletics activities and provide a one-stop guide to para athletics, including legacy stories, coaching tips, rules and classification guidance.

Boccia NZ

What was developed

Created the [Boccia: A Sport for All](#) delivery resource in collaboration with Disability Sport Wales and developed and distributed 30 [Inclusive Boccia Kits](#), each containing boccia balls, equipment and the delivery resource to support inclusive play.

Impact summary

Made it easier for players, teachers and coaches to access equipment and a training resource which has led to increased participation and regions that boccia is available.

“The Disability Inclusion Fund enabled the production of a ‘Para Handbook’ and ‘Adaptive Run, Jump, Throw Module’. This has had a major impact on the sport – coaches, officials, athletes and volunteers now have insights into how to adapt the fundamental movement patterns, games and associated technical aspects of the sport.”

Raylene Bates MNZM
National Development Manager (South) and National Para Lead, Athletics NZ

Canoe Racing NZ

What was developed

Developed and delivered PaddleAble resources aligned with the 'Try Learn Explore' learning framework.

Impact summary

Supports coaches and clubs to deliver inclusive canoeing. New Zealand now has 2 certified Para Canoe Classifiers.



Photo credit: Canoe Racing NZ

Recreation Aotearoa

What was developed

Created a Disability and Inclusion Programme Manager role to lead resource development.

Impact summary

New role created working groups with disabled people and sector specialist to develop sector resources.

What was developed

Partnered with Education Outdoors NZ and Sport NZ to develop outdoor accessibility guidance.

Impact summary

Supports inclusive planning and delivery in outdoor recreation.

What was developed

Collaborated with Accessible, #AdaptMRB, Department of Conservation, and the Mountain Council to develop a track-accessibility app.

Impact summary

The app will help disabled people assess whether they can complete all or part of a track independently.

What was developed

Developed Outdoors Accessibility Design Guidelines.

Impact summary

Guidelines viewed 950+ times, downloaded nearly 600 times, now cited in council strategies.

What was developed

Worked with Be.Lab to create aquatic facility accessibility information for websites.

Impact summary

Helps aquatic providers improve access to information for disabled users.



Photo credit: I.Leat and William Pike Challenge

3. Capacity within the sector

To ensure long-term impact, many organisations are continuing the work they started through the Disability Inclusion Fund. This includes retaining roles, embedding responsibilities into existing positions and scaling successful initiatives.



Ongoing roles

What's continuing

5 organisations will maintain the positions they created through the Disability Inclusion Fund.

Impact summary

These roles will continue to lead and support inclusive programmes, ensuring continuity and deeper impact.

Integrated roles

What's continuing

9 organisations will embed project responsibilities into existing staff roles.

Impact summary

Inclusion work has become part of core operations, helping to sustain momentum and embed inclusive practices across teams.

Scalable model

What's continuing

1 organisation created a local resource which will now be rolled out nationwide.

Impact summary

This will provide long-term value for the sector beyond the original funding period.

" The Disability Inclusion Fund has been a game changer for Swimming NZ. It has enabled us to work more effectively with the community level we previously did not have capacity or full understanding of. Local people who deliver week-to-week now have a direct connection with a group who can assist them and their participants. This will have long lasting impact in our sport. "

Cameron Leslie
Disability and Para Swimming
Participation Manager,
Swimming New Zealand

" Thanks to the Sport NZ Disability Inclusion Fund Sense Rugby (New Zealand) has been able to establish our foundations to enable growth of the programme across the motu. It has helped us transform from a small organisation to deliver our programme in 15 locations. "

Jo Allen
General Manager, Sense Rugby NZ

Lessons learnt

Across the 16 funded projects, there were 3 main reflections highlighted by the project leads:



Change takes time

Creating sustainable, inclusive change doesn't happen overnight. It requires patience and persistence.



Collaboration is essential

Working together, both within organisations and with others in the sector leads to better outcomes.



Local leadership matters

Disability projects are most effective when they're shaped and led by local communities, because every region has different needs.

Conclusion

The Disability Inclusion Fund has created real momentum across the 16 funded organisations, helping them become more inclusive of disabled tamariki and rangatahi. These projects have opened up more opportunities for participation and the resources developed will continue to benefit the wider sector. Providers also received training to ensure the experiences they offer are inclusive, welcoming and meaningful.

Photo credit: Sport Hawke's Bay



Of the 16 organisations that completed their projects, 14 will continue the mahi they've started, and 1 has created a resource now being prepared for nationwide rollout. This is a powerful outcome, showing that the fund has not only supported individual projects but also paved the way for long-term change across the sector.

Sport NZ is building on this positive momentum by continuing to support disability organisations and help partners strengthen inclusive practices over the next 3 years. This sustained funding reflects Sport NZ's long-term commitment to ensuring disabled tamariki and rangatahi can access quality, equitable and meaningful opportunities to participate in play, active recreation and sport – on their terms and in ways that matter to them.



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