



To: Universities, Colleges and RFU Member Clubs

30th June 2022

PREMIER 15s - INVITATION TO SUBMIT A FORMAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

At its meeting in November 2021 the RFU Council approved the mechanism for entry into the Premier 15s (currently known as the Allianz Premier 15s) league from 2023/24 as being a tender process. Following a further review process, the RFU Board and Council have approved the following with regard to the Premier 15s (P15s) league from 2023/24:

- The size of the P15s league has been modelled to start with between 8-10 clubs with the intention for this to expand over time if and when it is beneficial to do so.
- All clubs wishing to be involved in the P15s league from 2023/24 will be required to tender, including clubs currently involved in the P15s.
- The Selection Panel will make the final decision on those clubs selected for entry into the league in 2023/24, therefore teams chosen by the Selection Panel will be invited to join the Premier 15s starting from the 2023/24 season.
- Clubs entering the league in 2023/24 will remain in the league subject to the conditions of the Participation Agreement, the Regulations, or until such time that they fail to meet the league Minimum Operating Standards, or they choose to leave.
- The league will be reviewed prior to Year 4 (ahead of the 26/27 season) and prior to Year 7 (ahead of the 29/30 season).
- Successful applicants will be required to enter into such joint venture arrangements as notified to the applicants by the stipulated deadline. Further details of this will be provided during the course of the process.
- Successful applicants will also be required to comply with RFU regulations, competition regulations, participation agreement including MOS, club / RFU secondment agreements, such applicable commercial / broadcasting agreements, and such other agreements as notified by the RFU and / or designated joint venture company.

The vision and mission of the league has been refined as follows, but remains aligned to both the RFU and 'Every Rose' strategy in order to contribute to and achieve what is set out:

Vision – *A generation of players and fans inspired by world class club competition.*

Mission – *By being the most competitive, progressive and sustainable domestic league in the world.*

The eight objectives for the league are:

- Become the first professional women's club rugby league across all aspects of the game.
- Improve the overall quality of play and produce world class talent for the Red Roses by investing in high quality training environments.

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- Be a part of a coherent player pathway from grassroots to elite competition across England.
- Increase commercial revenue to drive long-term financial sustainability of the league.
- Grow audience engagement through both live and digital products, reaching new fans and deepening relations with the existing audience.
- Lead the way in rugby by aligning with the international calendar and by creating a high-quality, innovative product.
- Develop and retain a world-class workforce of players, coaches, officials and operational staff.
- Collaborate with the rugby community to drive the growth of the women and girls' game across England.

To that end, universities, colleges and RFU member clubs, are invited to submit an Expression of Interest to apply for a place in the league from the 2023/24 season. A summary of the opportunity, timeframes and the processes are provided in the documentation below.

Expressions of Interest should be made by completing the pro forma provided below and returning it by e-mail to **Premier15s@rfu.com**.

Expressions of Interest must be received no later than **5:00pm on Friday 12th August 2022**.

All clubs/universities/colleges who submit an Expression of Interest will then receive a full Request for Proposal (RFP) to apply for a place in the league. This will be sent by email on Monday 5th September with a response to the RFP due by 5pm on Friday 28th October 2022. The adjudication of tenders will take place in November and we will aim to notify successful teams in December 2022.

The submission of an Expression of Interest is without prejudice, and in no way constitutes an obligation, either on the club, university or college to pursue a place in the league, or to enter into an agreement with the RFU; or on the RFU to develop the RFP process or to enter into an agreement with any club, university or college.

This Expression of Interest stage is an initial and indicative exercise, with the intention of gauging the level of interest among clubs, universities and colleges, prior to circulation of the RFP, whose contents will supersede the information given within the documentation provided here.

However, failure to submit an Expression of Interest by the stated deadline may mean that a club, university or college is not subsequently invited to submit a proposal for the award of a place in the league.

If you have any queries regarding this process, please do not hesitate to contact premier15s@RFU.com, otherwise we look forward to receiving your response, as appropriate, in the near future.



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Conor O'Shea".

Conor O'Shea
Director of Performance Rugby
Rugby Football Union

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INVITATION TO SUBMIT AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Introduction

From 2023/24 onwards a new company will be established to manage certain elements of the Premier 15s league competition. This new company ('NewCo') will be a joint venture between the RFU and the successful applicant clubs, with its own CEO reporting into an independent board comprised of independent, club and RFU members.

The RFU will invest approximately £24m over a 10-year period to cover the central costs of the league while clubs will be expected to cover their own costs, in line with the MOS. The costs associated with doing so will vary between clubs, but the net investment for each club is expected to be approximately £600k per year for the first 2 years. Over a 10-year period this figure is likely to average approximately £240k per year, although any future investment figures are yet to be determined and are subject to change, including change in the business plan. Clubs / institutions are asked to consider these costs carefully, and whether they will be able to meet them, before submitting an Expression of Interest.

Equity ownership of the league will be split between the RFU and clubs.

Minimum Standards Framework

All clubs will be required to deliver against a set of minimum standards, which will create an infrastructure within clubs to support the move towards professionalisation in the women's game. The key focus of these minimum standards is:

- Developing an environment that enables and supports education / career / personal development alongside rugby.
- Increasing the investment in coaching resource to further support players in training throughout the week.
- Enhancing the physical preparation provision to further develop player readiness and robustness.
- Enhancing the sports science and medical provision for both training and match days.
- Improving the quality of and access to the training and playing environment.
- Establishing relationships with local universities, clubs and/or colleges to provide further opportunities to develop players.
- Ensuring effective club infrastructure, governance and financial sustainability.
- Increasing the investment in marketing and commercial activity to raise the profile of the league, engage new audiences and drive game attendance.
- Enhancing the in stadia match-day experience for players and fans.

Clubs will be expected to have a registered player base of 45 adult players, of whom at least 30 are capable of playing at the highest level in the women's domestic game and in order to field a first XV. In addition, clubs will continue to be able to dual register up to 15 players. It is expected there will be an England Qualified Player requirement set for all first XV games, which may require clubs to play a certain number of England qualified players in a first XV match-day squad.

Participation Agreements

Clubs and/or institutions which are included within the league will sign a participation agreement with the RFU which sets out the terms and conditions of participation, and the respective obligations of each party. These may include, but not be limited to, the following, which may be subject to change and adherence to the minimum standards:

- The NewCo, in association with the RFU and other partners, as part of the agreement will provide regular CPD for all club coaches, sports science and medical staff.
- The RFU may collaborate with successful applicants within the following and other relevant areas:
 - The securing of grant-aid funding to improve rugby facilities, including and especially grass and/or artificial rugby pitches.
 - Post-retirement education and career development for professional players.
 - Sports science and medicine research and development.
 - Other relevant fields of research and development.
- The RFU/NewCo will retain certain commercial/sponsor/data rights for the league, and participants will have an obligation to display commercial materials on behalf of commercial partners engaged by the RFU/NewCo:
 - Within the team's stadium.
 - On its playing kit.
 - On its website.

Timeframe

The timeframe within which this process should be delivered has been agreed as follows:

Action	By When	By Whom
Deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest by clubs, universities and colleges	By 5pm on 12 th August 2022	Clubs, Universities and Colleges
Request for Proposals (RFP) issued to those entities who have expressed an interest in bidding for a place in the league	5 th September 2022	RFU
Opportunity for interested entities who have expressed an interest in bidding for a place in the league to meet with RFU	During September and October 2022	RFU / Clubs, universities and colleges
Deadline for submission of proposals from applicants	By 5pm 28 th October 2022	Clubs, universities and colleges
Evaluation by Selection Panel of proposals submitted by applicants, and shortlisting for interview	By 22 nd November 2022	Selection Panel



Action	By When	By Whom
Interviews/presentations by shortlisted applicants, to Selection Panel for adjudication	28 th November – 7 th December 2022	Selection Panel and shortlisted applicants
Notification to shortlisted applicants of the results of the adjudication process (subject to appeals)	By end of December 2022	RFU
Participation agreements issued to successful applicants	Spring 2023	RFU

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PREMIER 15s LEAGUE – EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Section 1*:

* Where a joint application is being submitted, please also complete Section 2.

Name of Applicant		
Address		
Website		
Principal contact (i.e. the person to whom the RFP should be sent)	Name	
	Position	
	Telephone	
	Email	

Section 2:

Name of Applicant		
Address		
Website		
Principal contact (i.e. the person to whom the RFP should be sent)	Name	
	Position	
	Telephone	
	Email	

Section 3:

We wish to express our interest in submitting a proposal to participate in the Premier 15s league with effect from September 2023		
Details of the person completing this pro forma, who hereby confirms that she/he has the authority to do so	Signature	
	Name	
	Position	
	Date	

Please return this pro forma no later than **5pm on 12th August 2022**.

Expressions of Interest should be returned to: premier15s@RFU.com.

Failure to submit an Expression of Interest by the stated deadline may mean that a club/institution is not subsequently invited to submit a proposal for a place in the league.