



IMG

# REIMAGINING RUGBY LEAGUE

SEPTEMBER 2022



# WE ARE CURRENTLY IN PHASE 1 OF THE IMG PARTNERSHIP

PHASE 1

## REIMAGINATION

**REIMAGINING RUGBY LEAGUE**  
(FOCUS OF THIS PRESENTATION)

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

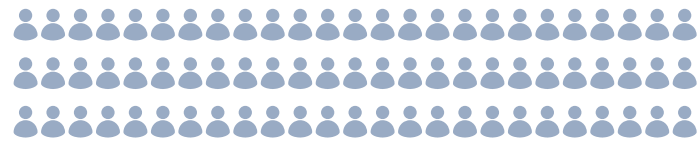
BRAND POSITIONING

PHASE 2

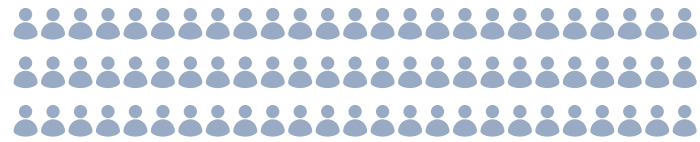
## GROWTH & MAXIMISATION

# WE CONSULTED EXTENSIVELY WITH STAKEHOLDERS ON THE FUTURE OF THE GAME

## STAKEHOLDERS



**35** CONSULTATIONS  
WITH APPROXIMATELY  
**150 PARTICIPANTS**

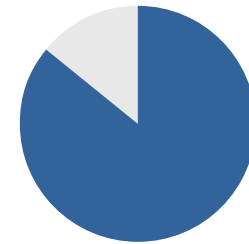


## FANS

**18,315**  
RESPONSES  
TO ONLINE SURVEY

14 FOCUS GROUPS  
WITH OVER

**80** IN TOTAL  
ATTENDING THE  
SESSIONS



**86%**  
DESCRIBED  
THEMSELVES  
AS COMMITTED  
RUGBY LEAGUE  
FANS





# WE HAVE DEVELOPED **THREE** **OBJECTIVES** FOR OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

**1**

Create a competitive and compelling top tier league that attracts new fans and engages existing ones.

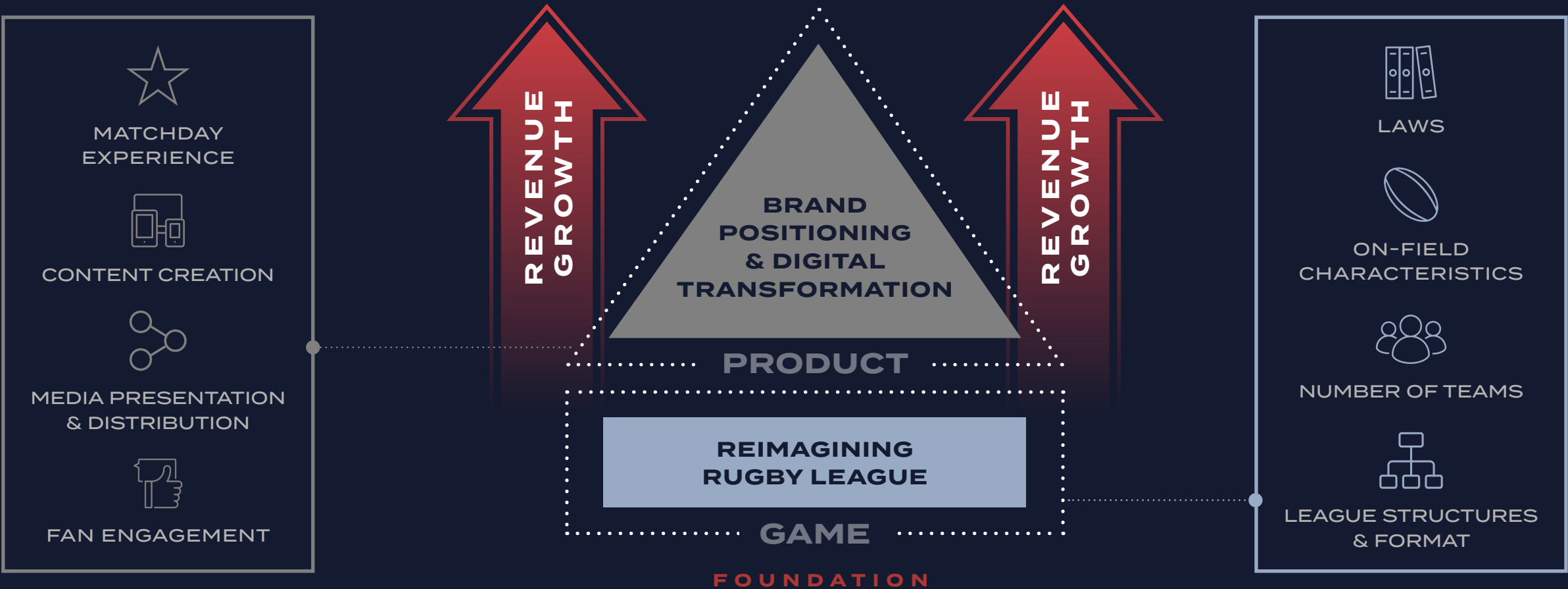
**2**

Develop a structure that allows clubs to move towards financial stability and encourages new investment.

**3**

Drive growth and maximise revenues from which the full Rugby League pyramid **will benefit**, including Championship, League 1, women's, wheelchair and community game.

# RUGBY LEAGUE STAKEHOLDERS NEED TO FOCUS **ON IMPROVING THE PRODUCT**



# WE PROPOSE SEVEN

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO FORM THE FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

1

### A RE-POSITIONED CALENDAR

Which optimises flow, narrative and engagement, incorporating regular ‘peaks’ of interest and a compelling season climax.

2

### A RE-ALIGNED CALENDAR

With the global game to facilitate an international window in October and incorporate a mid-season international.

3

### INTRODUCE A GRADING SYSTEM

Participation in the top tier based on a range of on- and off-field criteria, delivered through a club grading system, introduced to support financial sustainability and encourage investment into clubs.

4

### AN EXPANSION STRATEGY

To be developed that targets and supports growth in new markets.

5

### CAPPED PLACES FOR CLUBS OUTSIDE UK

With additional criteria to support domestic growth.

6

### CENTRALISATION OF OPERATIONS

To maximise efficiencies and drive incremental revenue (e.g. ticketing, digital infrastructure).

7

### A NEW BRAND STRATEGY

To be introduced and aligned with the above commercial strategy.

## RECOMMENDATION

1

# A RE-POSITIONED CALENDAR

Which optimises flow, narrative and engagement – incorporating regular ‘peaks’ of interest and a compelling season climax.

## RECOMMENDATION

2

# A RE-ALIGNED CALENDAR

With the global game to facilitate an international window in October and incorporates a mid-season international.

- + Removal of loop fixtures (including Magic round).
- + Challenge Cup brought forward with Final taking place in May.
- + Renewed focus on international game as a vehicle for growth.
- + Creation of New Event to engage with new audience.



RECOMMENDATION **3**

# INTRODUCE A GRADING SYSTEM

**Participation in the top tier based on a grading system, introduced to support financial stability and encourage investment into clubs.**

- + Grading introduced in 2024 (illustrative only) and in practice in 2025.
- + **Criteria announced prior to start of the 2023 season.**
  - + Objective, easily measurable, reliable, transparent and valid.
- + **Review of:**
  - + Salary cap (including introduction of salary cap floor).
  - + Marquee player rules.

## THREE TIERS OF GRADING:

## CATEGORY A

**TOP TIER PARTICIPANT  
ON A PERMANENT BASIS**

## CATEGORY B

**ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN  
THE TOP TIER ONLY WHEN  
SPACES ARE AVAILABLE**

## CATEGORY C

**PARTICIPATE IN  
THE 2<sup>ND</sup> OR 3<sup>RD</sup> TIER**



# RECOMMENDATION 3

## 2022 SEASON

- + 12 clubs in top tier.
- + Bottom club relegated, winner of second tier promoted.

## 2023 SEASON

- + 12 clubs in top tier.
- + Bottom club relegated, winner of second tier promoted.
- + Release 2024 club categories (illustrative only) at (end) of season.

## 2024 SEASON

- + Season calendar changes implemented.
- + 12 clubs in top tier.
- + Release 2025 club categories at (end) of season.

## 2025 SEASON

- + 12 clubs in top tier, minus Category A clubs, plus highest ranked Category B clubs.
- + Release 2026 club categories at (end) of season.

## 2026 SEASON

- + 12 clubs in top tier minus Category A clubs, plus highest ranked Category B clubs.
- + Mix of Category B clubs changed to reflect new rankings.
- + Release 2026 club categories at (end) of season.

## 202? SEASON

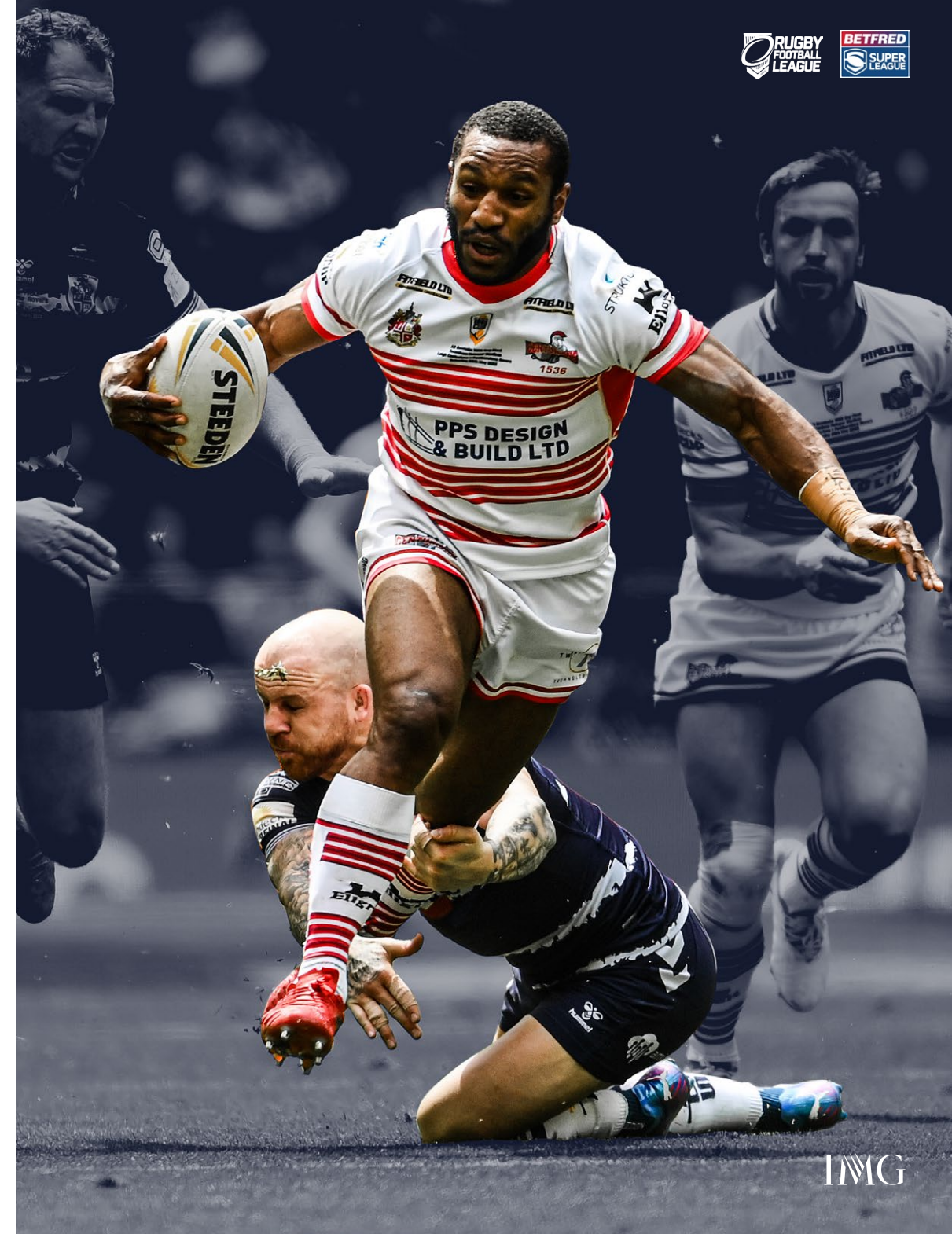
- + 12 clubs in top tier.
- + All clubs are Category A.

## 202? SEASON

- + 14 clubs in top tier.
- + All clubs are Category A.

# THE SECOND & THIRD TIER ARE IMPERATIVE FOR THE GROWTH OF THE GAME

- + Significant role in driving growth through participation, fan engagement and player development.
- + Objective is to develop highly competitive leagues and subsequently increase exposure (broadcast, digital and OTT).
- + Season peaks to include 1895 Cup Final and Grand Final Days for second and third tier.
- + Proportion of central funds remains constant – as game grows, so does the distribution.
- + 14 teams in second tier in 2024, number of teams in third tier to remain flexible.
- + Promotion and relegation between second and third tier based on performance.



# LICENSING HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE... BUT GRADING IS DIFFERENT



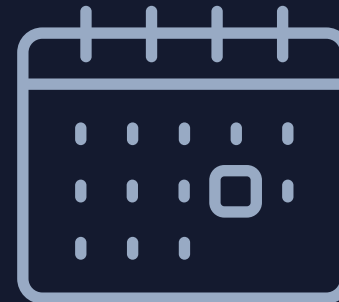
HIGH  
STANDARDS



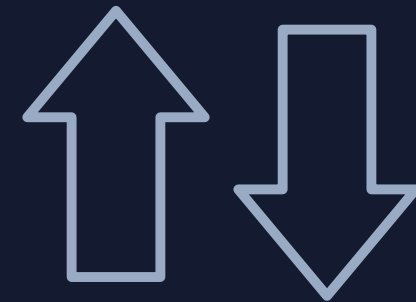
OPPORTUNITY



CURRENT  
STATE



ANNUAL  
REVIEW



DYNAMIC &  
FLEXIBLE

## RECOMMENDATION

4

# AN EXPANSION STRATEGY

**To be developed that targets and supports growth in new markets:**

- + A comprehensive strategy to provide a clear pathway for growth in identified markets.
- + Focusing on key drivers of success and actions required at the federation, league and club level.
- + Three identified areas of focus for growth: France, Women's game and London.

FAN SURVEY

*Rugby League should grow the sport further in areas outside of the traditional heartlands.*

74%

**STRONGLY AGREED  
OR AGREED WITH  
THIS STATEMENT**

## THREE IDENTIFIED AREAS OF FOCUS FOR GROWTH



FRANCE



WOMEN'S  
GAME



LONDON



## RECOMMENDATION

5

# CAPPED PLACES FOR CLUBS OUTSIDE UK

With additional criteria to support domestic growth.

- + Places for clubs outside the UK initially to be capped at two in total (Category A or B).
- + Additional criteria will apply to the participation of clubs from outside the UK.
  - + Minimum number of domestic players in matchday 17.
  - + Subsidisation of incremental travel costs of UK clubs until central contribution covers this cost.

## FAN SURVEY

*Clubs from France should participate in Super League.*

# 71%

**STRONGLY AGREED OR AGREED WITH THIS STATEMENT**





## RECOMMENDATION 6

# CENTRALISATION OF OPERATIONS

To maximise efficiencies and drive incremental revenue.

- + Direct benefits through realisation of synergies and cost saving.
- + Indirect benefits via improvement of the Product.

### POTENTIAL BUSINESS FUNCTIONS FOR CENTRALISATION



TICKETING



DIGITAL



CRM & ANALYTICS



MARKETING & PR



MERCHANDISE



PROCUREMENT



RECOMMENDATION **7**

# A NEW BRAND STRATEGY

To be introduced and aligned with the commercial strategy.

## SUCCESS KEY

- 1 MAINTAIN FAMILIARITY
- 2 EXCITE NEW FANBASE
- 3 DEVISE BRAND IDENTITY
- 4 ALIGN 'BRAND' PORTFOLIO
- 5 DEFINE 'BRAND' GUIDELINES

# QUESTIONS?



