



# Resilient Reefs Pasifika

## Accelerator Program Workshop Summary

22-25 July 2025, Pacific Harbour, Fiji



Figure 1. Workshop participants in Pacific Harbour, Fiji. Image credit: Pate Creatives.

10 September 2025

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## Resilient Reefs Pasifika

Resilient Reefs Pasifika (RRP) is a regional partnership that seeks to enhance and connect the design and delivery of locally led projects that build the resilience of Pacific coral reefs and the people that depend on them. It responds to the fact that Pacific coral reefs and communities are under serious threat from climate change. While there is incredible strength, knowledge and leadership in the region, efforts to date are often fragmented, under-resourced and under-funded.

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF), in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and other regional partners, will deliver this AUD\$15 million 5-year initiative. As a result of this collective effort, partnering with communities, governments and organisations across the region, we expect to: increase the resilience of coral reefs and local communities; enhance resources and connections to deliver reef resilience solutions at scale; and engage and coordinate with donors.

The RRP Accelerator Program is one of the two workstreams of RRP and seeks to foster and connect a region-wide pipeline of projects that can deliver on the [Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan 2021-2030](#). This annual initiative focuses on growing Pacific-led reef conservation by investing directly in the local organisations driving this work — not just funding projects, but strengthening the people, systems, and partnerships behind them. Each year (for four years), we select 4–6 local organisations, helping them strengthen their teams, refine their ideas, and access the resources they need to succeed. GBRF has partnered with Talanoa Consulting for the delivery of the RRP Accelerator Program.

## RRP Accelerator program workshop

The Resilient Reefs Pasifika (RRP) Accelerator Program workshop was held from July 22-25 in Pacific Harbour, Fiji (Figures 1 and 3), which was aimed at supporting and connecting project partners and the broader Pacific reef community. Links to media communications and other resources relating to the Accelerator workshop are provided in [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#).


This in-person workshop is a key component of the Accelerator program, designed to support the project partners of the first RRP Accelerator Program in making connections, providing targeted project readiness support, aligning partnerships, and building momentum for delivering on the Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan. The agenda focused on three key themes: project design, resource mobilisation, and organisational readiness. The format was a combination of presentations, breakout sessions, peer learning and field activities aimed at strengthening Pacific reef community partnerships and collaboration.

**Participants** included project leads from the first RRP Accelerator Program cohort (discussed in detail below) and **strategic advisors**, including Pacific experts and representatives from non-profit organisations. **Donor representatives** who participated included Oceans 5, Blue Prosperity Fiji, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Matanataki, and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). **Pacific Reef Community** representatives from the University of the South Pacific, Birdlife International, Wildlife Conservation Society, and Marine Ecology Consulting also attended. The full participant list is provided in [Appendix 3](#).

## RRP Accelerator projects

The first RRP Accelerator cohort features five diverse projects:

1. **[Drawaqa Marine Conservation Trust \(Fiji\)](#)**  
A long-standing partnership between resorts, dive operators, and communities in the Yasawas, focused on expanding tabu areas, coral restoration, and sustainable tourism, with Accelerator support to strengthen capacity, donor engagement, and scale ridge-to-reef conservation.
2. **[Island Conservation \(Tuvalu\)](#)**  
A global leader in restoring island biodiversity by removing invasive species, now expanding innovative drone-based rat eradication to Tuvalu's Nukufetau Atoll, with Accelerator support to validate the approach and strengthen ecological and community resilience across the Pacific.
3. **[Live & Learn \(Solomon Islands\)](#)**  
A ridge-to-reef initiative in the Solomon Islands that integrates ecosystem protection with community-led resilience, emphasising long-term sustainability through local



leadership, stakeholder collaboration, and innovative conservation financing, with Accelerator support to strengthen design and donor engagement.

**4. [Ocean Toa](#) (Cook Islands)**

A purpose-driven ecotourism and conservation initiative repurposing dormant pearl farms into coral sanctuaries, strengthening community collaboration, youth education, and resilient ocean-based economies to safeguard marine biodiversity and cultural heritage while opposing deep-sea mining.

**5. [Rare Fish Forever](#) (Palau)**

A community-led coastal management program combining traditional practices and science, expanding from Melekeok to Ngchesar and Ngiwal States to create Palau's first networked marine management system, with Accelerator support to refine design, engage donors, and scale nationally.

## Cross-cutting themes

Despite their diverse approaches to conservation and resilience and different contexts and scales, several common themes emerged over the course of the workshop. These included:

**1. Cross-cutting themes in project design**

- Integration of traditional and scientific knowledge was central to all projects, with strong emphasis on community-led approaches and cultural legitimacy.
- Ridge-to-reef or holistic ecosystem approaches framed the projects, linking land, sea, and community livelihoods.
- Socio-ecological co-benefits such as food security, youth livelihoods, women's empowerment, and cultural revival were positioned as equally important as biodiversity outcomes.
- Phased and scalable implementation models were common, with projects using pilots or feasibility phases to test, demonstrate, and expand their operations.
- Innovation featured strongly, such as drone-based rat eradication, coral nurseries, and reef tourism to generate revenue.

**2. Organisational readiness priorities**

- Governance and inclusivity aimed at strengthening the representation of women, youth, and marginalised groups in project design and decision-making.
- Administrative and staffing capacity in line with requests for dedicated coordinators, interns, or administrative staff to support project advancement.
- Policies and safeguards, in line with updating governance, financial, and GEDSI frameworks to meet donor due diligence requirements.
- Partnerships and stakeholder convening with multi-sector steering committees, conservation coalitions, and government linkages were flagged as critical.

- Storytelling and communications to build credibility and visibility with funders and communities through media, awareness, and accessible narratives.
- Re-granting and capacity strengthening, with mid-size NGOs highlighting the need to strengthen systems and models for channelling funds to smaller CSOs, to expand reach and support grassroots organisational development.

### **3. Resource mobilisation trends**

- Philanthropic and bilateral donors remain a primary target, including Bloomberg, Oceans 5, Packard Foundation, and FCDO.
- Market-based and blended finance solutions are emerging, such as sustainable tourism revenues, diaspora sponsorships, and biodiversity/blue carbon credits.
- Co-financing and funder matchmaking support were explicitly requested (Island Conservation, Ocean Toa).
- Scaling through partnerships (e.g., fiduciary arrangements with larger NGOs or donors) is seen as a pathway for smaller organisations to access bigger funds.

## **Insights on barriers and opportunities for climate funding**

Throughout the course of the workshop and in dedicated talanoa sessions, reflections were shared on the barriers and opportunities locally-led projects face in connecting to climate funding and financing. These insights included:

- More effort is needed to help donors connect to and support regional and national plans/frameworks.
- Many organisations in the region, particularly smaller, locally-led organisations, don't understand how to connect to donors. More can be done to collectively encourage more transparency in donor funding pipelines.
- There are opportunities for greater coordination and leverage between bilateral/multilateral and private philanthropy.
- More funding is needed for small grants to support capacity strengthening and organisation building to grow the field and equip smaller groups to receive larger grants in the future.
- There is a need for more innovative and regionally-led examples of what effective coordination and collaboration look like.
- Longer funding commitments are needed to support relationship building and ensure investments deliver impact.



## Participant feedback and key takeaways

Feedback was collected from participants through discussion, Mentimeter activities and an anonymous post-workshop online survey. Key takeaways reflected the shared value of connections and networking that the workshop provided for participants.

Participants described their workshop experience as **insightful, engaging, inspiring** and **productive**, with the opportunities for **networking, learning** and **sharing** from one another resonating the most.

Content that was rated as the most interesting included **project presentations** and **report-outs, break-out groups** and **side discussions**, Talanoa sessions on **community** engagement and partnerships, and information and constructive feedback on **donors**.

Of the three pillars of support (Project Design, Organisational Readiness, Resource Mobilisation), Project teams felt the workshop helped advance their **project design** the most.

Suggestions from participants for what they would like to see more of, if the workshop were held again, included: **field trips, talanoa sessions** and **side conversations**, and other sessions dedicated to **donors, policy, GEDSI** and **geopolitics**. Participants would also value more time to refine their **project design**.

**Key takeaways** are summarised in Figure 2. The most valued outcomes were the **connections, collaborations** and **networks** that participants accessed via the workshop.



Figure 2: Mentimeter summary of key takeaways from the RRP Accelerator workshop 2025.

## Next steps for the RRP Accelerator Program

### Accelerator cohort 1

RRP will continue partnering closely with the first Accelerator cohort to enhance project and organisational readiness, and facilitate connections with other key actors across the Pacific. Key next steps for this first cohort include:

- **Deployment of small grants** to fill feasibility gaps. Based on the priorities assessed during the workshop, GBRF will deliver AUD 400,000 across the cohort in small grants. These will cover anything from upgrading smaller organisation's financial and operational plans, to resources for supporting necessary stakeholder outreach, or monitoring of ecosystem health to inform appropriate interventions.
- **Peer learning** sessions focusing on topics nominated by the cohort, such as proposal writing, donor relations, marine monitoring, coral reef restoration, traditional ecological knowledge, climate financing and subgranting to communities.
- **Technical support** in fulfilling their design, readiness and mobilisation goals.
- **Project funding** - cohort 1 small Grant Agreements will end on **30 June 2026**. By this stage, activities completed as part of the RRP Accelerator Program should have progressed the project's design and organisation's readiness to align them with future potential funders, and be ready to apply for funding to implement their projects.

### Accelerator cohort 2

RRP will also begin recruiting for the next cohort. The RRP Accelerator cohort 2 review process commenced in **August 2025**, with outreach and selection scheduled to occur between **October–November 2025**. Early engagement and administration of the new Accelerator participants will occur in **December and January**, and the project onboarding phase is due to commence in **February 2026**.

The RRP team welcomes potential nominations for our future Accelerator Program cohort participants. If you have any questions, feedback or suggestions, please get in touch with the RRP Director **Ana Perez** ([aperez@barrierreef.org](mailto:aperez@barrierreef.org)).

## Appendix 1: Communications & media links

GBRF Website:

- [GBRF Resilient Reefs Pasifika webpage](#)

GBRF LinkedIn posts:

- [Resilient Reefs Pasifika Program announcement](#)
- [RRP Accelerator Program - meet the first 5 projects](#)
- [RRP Accelerator Workshop post](#)

## Appendix 2: Resources shared with the 2025 Accelerator project cohort

- [Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan](#)
- [Oxfam's Organisational Capacity Strengthening Tool for Pacific CSOs](#)
- [Resource library](#)
- [RRP Accelerator Guide](#)
- [Final Accelerator Workshop Synopsis Report](#)



## Appendix 3: Participants

Organisation	Name	Position	Attendance
Resilient Reefs Pasifika Accelerator Program 2025 project cohort			
Drawaqa Marine Conservation Trust (Fiji)	Rob Macfarlane	Co-Founder	22-25 July
Island Conservation (Tuvalu)	Carleigh McDonald	Managing Campaign Director, Island-Ocean Connection Challenge	
	Jesse Friedlander	Project Manager	
Live and Learn (Solomon Islands)	Elmah Panisi	Country Director	
	Teliska Pesenti	Environmental Protection Program Manager	
Ocean Toa (Cook Islands)	Louisa Castledine	Co-Founder	
	Jemina Samson	Staff member	
Rare (Palau)	Angel Uson	Director Program Management	
	Kevin Mesebeluu	Program Implementation Manager	
Resilient Reefs Pasifika funder and workshop facilitation			
Great Barrier Reef Foundation	Ana Perez	Director, Resilient Reefs Pasifika	22-25 July
	Amy Armstrong	Strategic Advisor	
	Carolyn Trewin	Senior Program Manager	
	Kalara McGregor	Director, Pacific Partnerships	
	Theresa Fyffe	Executive Director, Impact	24-25 July
Resilient Reefs Pasifika Accelerator Program delivery partner and workshop facilitation			
Talanoa Consulting	Marita Manley	Principal Consultant	22-25 July
	Dr Sangeeta Mangubhai	Principal Consultant & Research Scientist	
	Ritesh Chand	Consultant	
	Kimberly Samson	Consultant	
	Merewalesi Nailatikau	Principal Consultant	24 July
Advisors			
Pacific Advisor & Consultant	Dr Joeli Veitayaki	Strategic Advisor	22-25 July
Pacific Advisor & Consultant	Dr Milika Nagasima Sobey	Strategic Advisor	24-25 July
The Nature Conservancy	Dr Yimnang Golbuu	Coral Resilience Director, The Nature Conservancy, Micronesia & Polynesia	22-25 July
Pacific Advisor & Consultant	Taholo Kami	Strategic Leadership/Advisor	25 July
Donor representatives			
Oceans 5	Semisi Seruitanoa	Pacific Program Manager	22-25 July
Blue Prosperity Fiji	Saras Sharma-Gounder	Country Manager	24-25 July

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)	Rosi Waqanisau	Blue Planet Fund Regional Programme Officer	24-25 July
Matanataki	Jodi Smith	Matanataki CEO	24 July (2h)
GIZ	Iris Cordelia Rotzoll	Manager of Pacific NDC Hub	25 July
<b>Pacific Reef Community representatives</b>			
USP	Dr Amanda Ford	Senior Lecturer, Marine Studies	22 & 24 July
Birdlife International	Melania Bulimaitoga	Conservation Officer	24 & 25 July
Wildlife Conservation Society	Dr Stacy Jupiter	Executive Director, Global Marine Program	25 July (2h)
Marine Ecology Consulting	Helen Skyes	Director	23 July
<b>Professional Photographer</b>			
Pate Creatives	Alipate Laveti	Photographer/Videographer	24-25 July



Figure 3. Workshop participants from day four. Image credit: Pate Creatives.