



## Briefing Note: Update on the Urgent Response Fund (COVID-19)

<b>To</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Cc</b>	Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon Jenny Salesa, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date</b>	8 October 2020	<b>Priority</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No</b>	1242528
<b>Drafter</b>	Georgina Muir	<b>DDI</b>	04 463 8017
<b>Key Contact</b>	Susan Howan	<b>DDI</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Messaging seen by Communications team</b>	No	<b>Round Robin</b>	No

### Purpose of Report

This report updates you on the Urgent Response Fund (URF) for children and young people's COVID-19 related needs, including:

- analysis of the distribution of funding to date
- the needs being identified, interventions to support them, and examples of innovation
- the steps that Ministry regional offices are taking to support implementation.

**Agree** that this Briefing will be proactively released.

☒ **Agree** / ☐ **Disagree**

### Summary

- The URF provides \$50 million to support children and young people who need extra help with their attendance and re-engagement with learning following the COVID-19 lockdowns. Almost \$15 million of URF funding has been deployed to date.
- We are continuing to encourage applications that support Māori and Pacific learners, learners from low decile schools and kura, and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with the greatest levels of need in relation to attendance and engagement.

  
Katrina Casey  
Deputy Secretary  
Sector Enablement & Support Group

  
Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education

7, 10, 2020

28, 10, 20

## Background

---

1. The Urgent Response Fund (URF) provides \$50 million in 2020/21 to support children and young people who need extra help, especially in terms of attendance, their re-engagement with learning, and safeguarding and promoting their wellbeing after the COVID-19 lockdowns.
2. This monthly update follows a previous report on 1 September 2020 (METIS 1239151 refers) and fortnightly updates in the Education Weekly Update (EWU).
3. We have used the Equity Index to allocate the URF funding to regions. The Equity Index targets funding to regions with relatively higher levels of disadvantage, where the impact of COVID-19 on well-being, attendance, and engagement will be most significant. The regional Directors of Education approve applications, working with regional groups, to ensure that local knowledge and priorities inform funding decisions.

## Allocation of URF funding to 30 September

---

4. Annex 1 provides a summary of the allocation of URF funding to 30 September 2020. Since online applications opened on 4 August 2020, the Ministry has approved 1,479 applications, valued at \$13.5 million from 984 schools and kura, and 215 applications valued at \$1.4 million from 209 early learning centres me nga kōhanga reo.<sup>1</sup>
5. This is a significant increase from the 205 applications valued at \$1.9 million reported on 1 September, highlighting the momentum of the fund through the last month.
6. Approved applications to date represent 30% of the total value of the fund nationally, though the proportion varies from region to region. Auckland has approved the highest value of applications (\$2.9 million), which accounts for 20% of its regional allocation.
7. A total of 3,741 applications were submitted through the online form up to 30 September 2020. To date 679 of these have not been progressed. Reasons for this include where the use of the fund does not meet the purpose or is not in scope, as well as duplicate applications and those submitted in error. Directors of Education are working closely with applicants, redirecting them to other funds where relevant.
8. Directors of Education and their teams are also working through the 1,583 applications remaining in the system. This includes following up where documentation is incomplete or further due diligence is required. It also includes engaging regional specialists (for example for Māori medium applications) and quality assuring decisions made within the region, as well as utilising regional groups for applications the groups have chosen to review (for example, high value applications).
9. The number of new applications being submitted peaked around the end of August, when 832 were submitted in a single week. This resulted in a peak in approvals in the weeks of 16 and 23 September. The number of new applications being submitted has now slowed, in line with the end of the school term.

## ***Schools and kura in receipt of URF funding***

10. We have analysed the profile of the 984 schools and kura with approved URF applications using key metrics relating to decile, priority learners and attendance.

---

<sup>1</sup> We also approved \$102,690 of paper-based applications received in July 2020 on which data is limited and so are not included in the analysis.



11. Schools and kura in low deciles are relatively well represented in the proportion of URF funding that has been approved and the number of learners supported when compared with the number of learners in eligible schools and kura overall across these deciles. For example, decile 1 schools and kura account for 7% of all the learners nationally but make up 12% of the value of approved URF applications and 11% of the learners supported by them<sup>2</sup>.
12. The percentage of Māori learners<sup>3</sup> in schools and kura which have approved URF applications is, overall, slightly lower than the percentage of Māori learners in all eligible schools and kura. In two regions, Tai Tokerau and Hawkes Bay, Tairāwhiti, the difference is more than 4%.
13. The percentage of Pacific learners in schools and kura which have approved URF applications is broadly aligned to the percentage of Pacific learners in all eligible schools and kura.
14. The percentage of learners not attending regularly based on Term 2 attendance data<sup>4</sup> in schools and kura which have approved URF applications is the same or slightly higher than all eligible schools.
15. It will be important in the next phase of implementation to ensure schools and kura with high proportions of priority learners are being well supported by the URF. Directors of Education will continue to work with their regional groups to target support to schools and kura in low deciles and with the greatest attendance challenges.

## Needs and interventions

---

16. Achieving consistent, sustained attendance within schools and kura remains a key focus for applications to the URF. For example, almost half of the funding (45%) allocated in Auckland was to support needs related to attendance. By comparison, nationally 24% of the funding allocated was to support needs related to attendance.
17. Applications also demonstrate the high levels of stress and anxiety experienced by ākonga and the impact this is having on their behaviour, relationships, engagement with learning and academic progress. This is particularly heightened in Auckland, following the impact of the second lockdown.
18. Annex 2 provides examples of the breadth of needs, the range of proposed interventions and some examples of innovation included in URF applications.

## Understanding the impact of the URF

---

19. The approach we are developing to URF reporting and evaluation seeks to limit placing additional demands on the sector while gaining insight into the fund's impact. Schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo which have had URF applications approved will be asked to report back on the impact of the funding towards the end of term four. They will be asked for a progress update on their use of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Figures relate to state and state integrated schools and kura only, and therefore exclude URF applications from early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo.

<sup>3</sup> School Rolls data is from July 2020 roll returns and not yet reported externally. Embargoed until 30/10/2020.

<sup>4</sup> Attendance data is from Term 2 of 2020 as at 16 September 2020. This is only for the 7 post-lockdown weeks of Term 2 and provided prior to finalisation of this data collection. This data is provided on 89% of schools. There may be collection bias, with many of the schools and kura with missing data being the ones with the lowest levels of attendance. This is a partial view of Term 2 attendance data produced for this analysis. The full Term 2 attendance report and accompanying data will be provided by the end of this year.

funding, and to consider whether the outcomes they specified in their application for ākonga are being realised.

20. We are analysing attendance data for URF funded schools and kura so that we can provide you with outcome analysis as the funding progressively takes effect. We expect to be able to provide analysis of this in our December 2020 update. We are also exploring whether there are existing measures (e.g. PISA, TIMSS, Wellbeing@School) which can help us evaluate the impact of the URF.
21. The online application form was updated on 16 September 2020 to provide more specific information about how URF funding will support priority learners and respond to attendance issues and other areas of need including re-engagement with learning and wellbeing. Future reports will provide more information in these areas.

## Next Steps

---

22. The recent reduction in the volume of applications due to school holidays provides Directors of Education and their regional groups with the opportunity to analyse the distribution of their local decisions, and develop allocation plans for the remaining funding. Encouraging applications that support Māori and Pacific learners, learners from low decile schools and kura, and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with the greatest levels of need (including around attendance) is a strong focus.
23. We will continue to update you fortnightly in the Education Weekly Update on key metrics for the URF, and we will update this Briefing Note every month.

## Proactive Release

---

24. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

## Annexes

---

Annex 1: Summary of URF allocation (4 August to 30 September 2020)

Annex 2: Needs, interventions and innovations



# COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND – Summary of URF allocation (4 August to 30 September 2020)

We have approved 1,479 applications to the URF totalling \$14.9m.

The URF is currently supporting 158,745 learners, almost 50,000 of whom are in Auckland.

## Early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo

- 13,171 learners supported across 209 services
- 215 approved applications, valued at \$1.4m
- Average funding of \$110 per learner

## Schools and kura

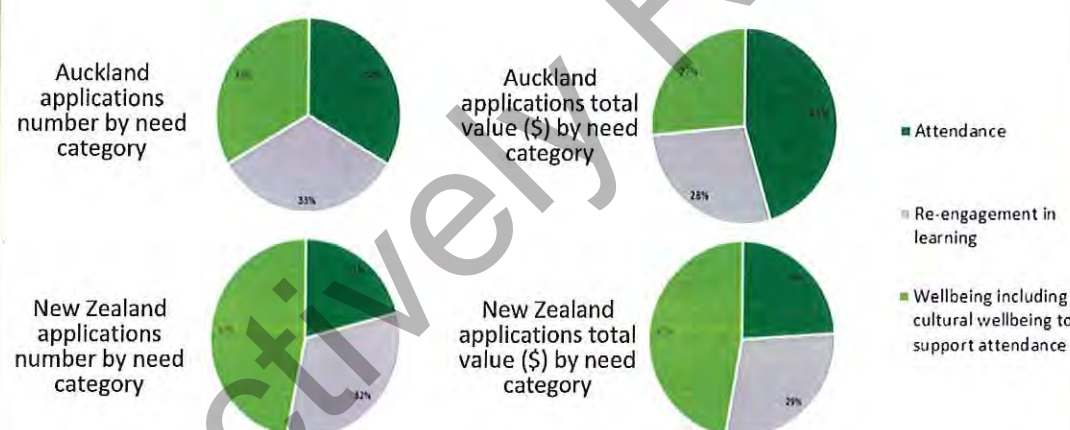
- 145,574 learners supported across 984 schools
- 1,264 approved applications valued at \$13.5m
- Average funding of \$94 per learner

Nationally, 30% of the URF has been allocated to early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura. Within Auckland, 20% of the region's funding (\$2.9m) has been allocated

Proportion of regional funding spent to date (\$ Millions)



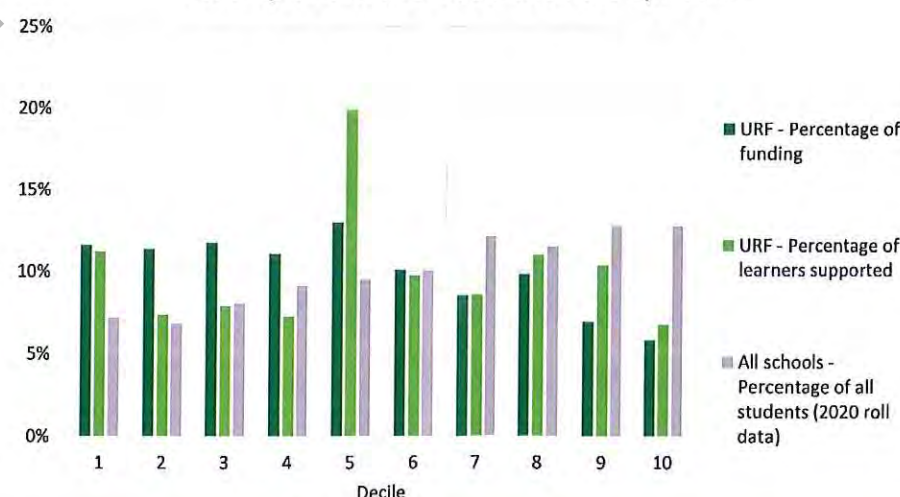
In Auckland, the **number** of approved applications was distributed evenly across three main areas of need, however almost half of the **funding** was to support needs related to attendance.



Schools and kura in lower deciles are relatively well represented in the proportion of URF funding they have received and the number of learners supported.

Note: The spike in the percentage of learners being supported in decile 5 is due to five large, cluster based applications which account for almost 20,000 learners.

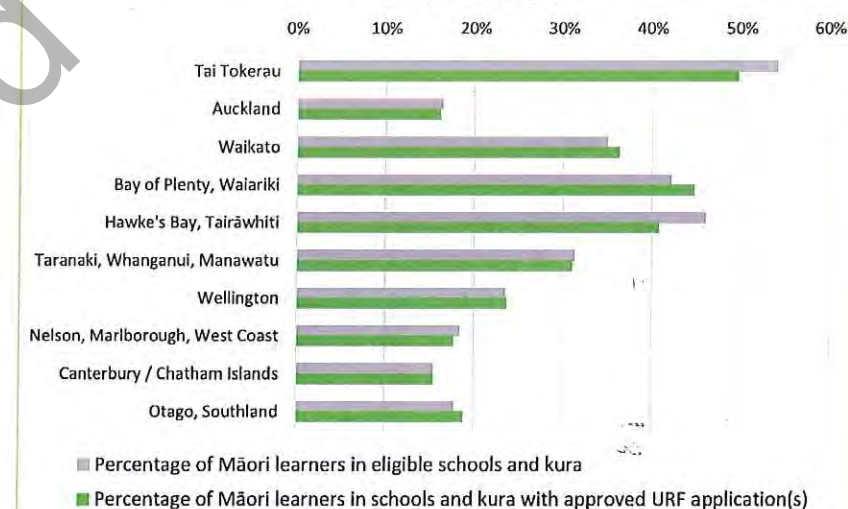
Take-up of URF in schools and kura by decile



There are opportunities to better target the URF to ensure we are supporting schools and kura with:

- higher proportions of Māori and Pacific learners
- lower levels of regular attendance.

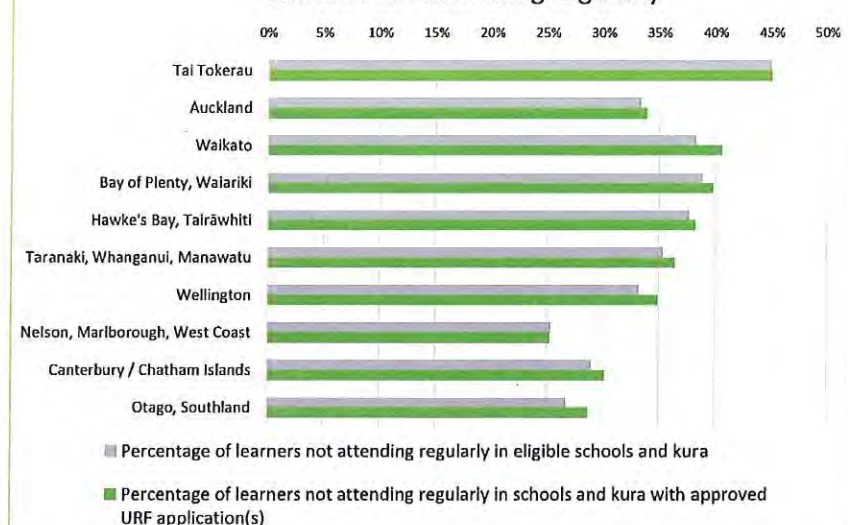
Take-up of URF in schools and kura by percentage of Māori learners



In five regions, the percentage of Māori learners in schools and kura with approved URF applications is lower than the percentages of Māori learners in all eligible schools.

In two of these regions the difference in percentage of Māori learners is greater than 4%.

Take-up of URF in schools and kura by percentage of learners not attending regularly



In most regions, schools and kura with approved URF applications have slightly higher percentages of learners not attending regularly (based on Term 2 data) than all eligible schools.

## Notes:

**School Rolls** data is from July 2020 roll returns and not yet reported externally. Embargoed until 30/10/2020.

**Attendance** data is from Term 2 of 2020 as at 16 September 2020. This is only for the 7 post-lockdown weeks of Term 2 and provided prior to finalisation of this data collection. This data is provided on 89% of schools. There may be collection bias, with many of the schools and kura with missing data being the ones with the lowest levels of attendance. This is a partial view of Term 2 attendance data produced for this analysis. The full Term 2 attendance report and accompanying data will be provided by the end of this year.



# COVID-19 Urgent Response Fund – Needs, interventions and innovations

## Attendance

Needs	Examples of interventions
<p>Needs relating to attendance include ākonga who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• struggling to re-establish and settle into routines</li> <li>• not attending school because of underlying health conditions and vulnerable family members in their home</li> <li>• only attending intermittently</li> <li>• in families struggling to cope with the impact of COVID on their lives.</li> </ul> <p>Additional support is needed to get NCEA level students back into school and into their learning.</p>	<p><b>Primary and Secondary</b></p> <p>Engage a respected community member to work as an attendance advisor with a cluster of schools and early learning services.</p> <p>Provide a teacher aide who works in homes to deliver programmes to, and monitor progress of, those not in school.</p> <p>Enable teachers, teacher aides, principals, and kaumātua to visit homes, to reassure whānau that their child will be safe at school and talk to them about the school's wellbeing programme.</p> <p>Fund a support worker to connect with a group of students arriving late at school to address increased lateness issues.</p> <p>Fund a teacher aide to provide extra support for parents and children who have heightened anxiety especially around drop off each day.</p> <p>Use adventure-based counselling opportunities to re-connect and bring back students at high risk of not returning.</p> <p><b>Early Learning</b></p> <p>Fund a leader to actively connect with parents and whānau who are apprehensive about children returning, to re-engage, reassure, and ease transitions.</p> <p>Produce a video with positive messages about early learning centres having solid safety plans and good processes in place.</p> <p><b>Innovation example</b></p> <p><i>In a Southland community, two community-connected people with skills and community standing are facilitating the return of students refusing to come back to school by liaising with parents, and picking up students to physically get them to school, settle them in classes, and ensure they are ready for work.</i></p>

## Re-engagement with learning

Needs	Examples of interventions
<p>Needs related to <b>re-engagement in learning</b> include ākonga who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not focused, slow to task, sluggish and disinterested</li> <li>• finding it difficult to settle back into learning routines.</li> </ul> <p>Needs related to <b>catching up on lost learning</b> include children who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• falling behind, or have lost learning, for maths and reading.</li> <li>• not expected to meet curriculum levels.</li> </ul> <p>Ākonga who tended to find learning challenging have fallen further behind and are losing ground relative to peers.</p> <p>STEM subject pathways for senior Māori and Pacific ākonga are not working.</p>	<p><b>Primary and Secondary</b></p> <p>Provide tailored academic and vocational support initiatives to encourage the attendance and re-engagement of Year 13 ākonga.</p> <p>Provide a supplementary NCEA tutorial programme for Pacific ākonga, out of school hours.</p> <p>Fund additional NCEA courses and programmes from external providers.</p> <p>Provide an additional kaiāwhina to work with a group of ākonga in a Māori medium setting, providing a programme that caters to their needs.</p> <p>Use an external provider to deliver structured playground activities to re-engage ākonga in learning using problem solving approaches.</p> <p>Enable construction play using LEGO to strengthen creativity and create opportunities for storytelling, discussion and active re-engagement with learning.</p> <p><b>Early Learning</b></p> <p>Develop a reading corner as a peaceful sanctuary with soft flooring, floating fabrics, books and puzzles where children can re-engage, feel secure and valued.</p> <p>Provide fun learning opportunities to build confidence and communication skills with a music and movement instructor.</p> <p><b>Innovation example</b></p> <p><i>In an Auckland secondary school where senior students are struggling to re-engage in learning a careers advisor has been employed to support transitions from school into study and employment with subject selection and study advice.</i></p>

## Wellbeing to support attendance

Needs	Examples of interventions
<p>Needs relating to <b>social engagement</b> include ākonga needing to relearn communication skills, and make connections with each other again, so that they feel safe.</p> <p>Needs related to <b>anxiety and stress</b> include children who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chronically anxious and having panic attacks</li> <li>• exhibiting increasingly extreme behaviours, due to Covid anxiety and stress</li> <li>• traumatised by events at home including witnessing violence</li> <li>• very unsettled, with withdrawal reactions, violent outbursts, wetting and soiling, tantrums, climbing, and leaving the classroom.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Primary and Secondary</b></p> <p>Provide individual and group counselling sessions for students to learn techniques to positively manage anxiety and to support well-being, equipping students with self-management strategies, and developing their resilience.</p> <p>Fund a garden and kitchen coordinator to establish a Garden To Table project to motivate disengaged ākonga and improve self-regulation, social, and communication skills.</p> <p>Provide additional support to facilitate playground games, and support prosocial play in break times.</p> <p>Provide targeted support to a small group of high needs ākonga identified as having (or being likely to have) suffered particular stress, including family violence, poverty, and trauma.</p> <p>Fund a facilitator to run a Zones of Regulation programme with students and teachers.</p> <p>Employ a drama specialist to work with ākonga using scenarios related to their experiences to strengthen their coping strategies and foster resilience.</p> <p><b>Early Learning</b></p> <p>Equip quiet spaces with sensory toys, calming resources and books about emotions to rest, relax, read and listen to music.</p> <p>Purchase and use puppets to help children to express their feelings and thoughts in a comforting way.</p> <p>Create time for each child to have one-on-one attention, to express themselves positively, and be supported in group play.</p> <p><b>Innovation example</b></p> <p><i>A small rural school in South Canterbury has established lunch time clubs with a mix of activities aimed at all students to assist in building wellbeing and positive behaviour – teachers, principal and parents help with these. Club options available include baking, sports, karaoke, arts and crafts, kapa haka and building. A singing tutor takes seniors for professionally led singing once a week as research has shown that singing together strengthens the feeling of togetherness, and to reduce stress levels and depression.</i></p>

## Cultural wellbeing to support attendance

Needs	Examples of interventions
<p>Needs related to <b>cultural wellbeing</b> include ākonga and their whānau who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• struggling to trust, feel at ease, respected and provided a place where there are opportunities to fully participate and contribute to the re-engagement of their ākonga in learning</li> <li>• coping with immediate education, economic, social and health barriers that need to be understood from a cultural perspective</li> <li>• part of a family system that is complex and where support provided needs to be appropriate, individually tailored and taking into account the needs and resources available to the family/whānau.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Primary and Secondary</b></p> <p>Employ a Māori tutor to use a kaupapa Māori tikanga programme based on Te Whare Tapa Wha specifically to support the participation of Māori non-attendees and those at risk of disengagement.</p> <p>Use a Māori male role model with a specialised kaupapa Māori programme to support groups of young Māori boys.</p> <p>Fund a kaiāwhina role to support ākonga back to school with distance and increased onsite re-engagement activities.</p> <p>Provide a Pacific homework centre for a group of Pacific students with limited space at home, and who want to strengthen their identity, language and culture.</p> <p>Provide culturally diverse teacher aides (Māori, Samoan and Hindi/Punjabi) to assist children to attend and re-establish routines.</p> <p>Co-design a Pacific learning class by parents, students and the Pacific teacher for Year 11-13 students to address wellbeing issues that reflect Pacific culture and values.</p> <p><b>Early Learning</b></p> <p>Strengthen identity, language and culture with visits to the marae.</p> <p><b>Innovation example</b></p> <p><i>Near Tauranga, a kura kaupapa Māori is collaborating with Ngāti Pukenga Iwi, to implement a mokopuna/kaumātua/kuia programme to strengthen critical relationships through a kaupapa of sharing. Kaumātua and kuia share paraoa (bread) making, waiata and aspects of whaikōrero and karanga. Mokopuna in return share their knowledge on how to use technology and other digital avenues.</i></p>