



Briefing Note: Proactive release of institution level data on the Urgent Response Fund (COVID-19)

To	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Cc	Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
Date	27 April 2021	Priority	Medium
Security Level	In Confidence	METIS No	1257069
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Messaging seen by Communications team	No	Round Robin	No

Purpose of paper

This report updates you on the proactive release of institution level data on the allocation of Urgent Response Fund (URF) funding to the end of December 2020.

A draft media release is annexed to this report.

Agree that this Briefing is proactively released.

Agree / Disagree

Summary

- Over \$30 million of the \$50 million URF available in 2020/21 was distributed in 2020 to support children and young people's attendance, re-engagement in learning and wellbeing following the COVID-19 lockdowns.
- The Ministry will publish information on schools, kura, and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that received URF funding to the end of December 2020 on 10 May 2021.


Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement & Support

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

27/4/2021

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Background

1. The Urgent Response Fund (URF) provides \$50 million in 2020/21 to support children and young people's attendance, re-engagement in learning and wellbeing after the COVID-19 lockdowns.
2. We used the Equity Index (EQI) to allocate the URF to regions because it weighted funding to areas with relatively higher levels of disadvantage, and where the impact of COVID-19 on wellbeing, attendance, and engagement would be most significant.
3. The Ministry has accepted online applications for the URF since 4 August 2020.
4. The regional Directors of Education have worked with regional advisory groups to ensure local knowledge and priorities inform funding decisions and approve applications.
5. At the end of December 2020, Directors of Education, working with their regional advisory groups, had approved 3,219 applications valued at \$30.7 million for 2,136 institutions. The latest information (to 21 April 2021) is that 4,475 applications valued at \$43.4 million had been approved for 2,539 institutions¹.
6. We will publish lists of URF recipients on the Ministry's website to provide transparency about the use of the fund. Publication will also reduce the need for ad hoc information requests from news media, stakeholders and the education sector.

Proactive release of institution level data

7. On 10 May 2021 we will publish information on schools, kura, and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that received URF funding from 4 August to the end of December 2020.
8. We will publish two lists for each region:
 - A list of all institutions that made successful URF applications, showing:
 - the primary categories of need
 - the amount of funding provided
 - the total number of learners who were supported by the funding
 - the value of any cluster funding that was approved for the main applying institution
 - the number of learners who were supported by cluster funding.
 - A list of institutions that were included in each cluster that made successful URF applications. Note that we cannot specify, for each institution that is part of the cluster, how much they received and how many of their learners would be supported.

Consultation with schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo

9. Principals, Tumuaki, and their early learning equivalents included in this release have been consulted and given the opportunity to review data related to their institutions. Institutions funded as part of a cluster application have been consulted through the lead applicant.

¹ These figures do not include the \$205,191 allocated prior to 4 August 2020 when the online application process started. No monitoring data is available for this funding.

10. Overall, respondents supported the release of information. Individual queries and concerns about data quality and privacy have been responded to.
11. As a result of the consultation, we have made the following changes:
- Details on a small number of institutions are being withheld for privacy reasons, because the funding has followed an individual learner across different provision. The total value of this funding is still included in the release but masked to protect the identity of the ākonga
 - We have changed the “category of need” in a small number of cases, where institutions thought that another category was a more accurate description for their circumstances. This was necessary because the original application form in use from 4 August to 15 September 2020 did not ask for this information, and the regional office had assigned a category of need.
 - In the material to be released, we will explain that the number of learners is provided from the information in the funding application. This number may have changed during delivery of the intervention.
 - We will also explain that some education institutions received funding under multiple applications, and the same learners may have been supported under each application. This means that, in a small number of cases, the total number of learners supported is greater than the institution’s roll.

Next steps

12. We have prepared a draft media release for you to announce the release of the information and provide an update on the progress in distributing the fund to help ākonga return to school and re-engage in their learning. This is attached as Annex 1.
13. We will engage with your office to finalise the draft media release, and ensure that the timing of the announcement aligns to the information becoming available on www.education.govt.nz.
14. We will provide advice on the timing of a further and final release of URF information incorporating all funded institutions once the fund has been fully allocated in June 2021.

Proactive Release

15. 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: Draft media release for 10 May 2021

COVID-19 fund benefits hundreds of thousands of learners

More than 2,000 schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo have been funded, to help a total of approximately 350,000 learners affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns, through the \$50 million Urgent Response Fund.

Education Minister Chris Hipkins today released lists of institutions that have received a total of more than \$30 million in funding between August and December 2020.

“We’re getting feedback from education institutions with URF funding that they have seen improvements in the wellbeing, re-engagement in learning and attendance for the ākonga supported by the fund.

“Many have used the funding for additional teacher and teacher aide time to provide mentoring, academic catch-up and engaging with whānau.

“We have heard from a school, for example, that having the opportunity to talk through issues has made its secondary students realise they could still achieve NCEA.

“An early learning service has told us that a parent feels their child has a sense of belonging and has ‘found her voice’ from the wellbeing support families have been offered.”

Chris Hipkins says he would like to thank all the teachers, school leaders, support people, regional representatives - and learners themselves - for their commitment during and after the lockdowns.

“What has worked really well is having decisions made in the regions about how the fund is allocated. Our 10 regional education offices have worked with local experts - such as school principals, iwi, and early learning representatives - to engage with their communities and decide the best use of funds for local learners.”

The Urgent Response Fund can be used for school, early learning service or cluster-wide activities to support attendance, re-engagement with learning and wellbeing, or for individual students or groups of young people. It is a one-year fund until June 2021.