



Education Report: Wellbeing support for new principals

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Cc:			
Date:	7 April 2022	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1285250
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of report

This report seeks your agreement to actions to support the wellbeing of new principals in response to the continued disruption caused by COVID-19 outbreaks.

Summary

- The Ministry has ~\$5.7m of unallocated funds of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund available to use for education workforce wellbeing for FY2021/22.
- On 5 April, the Accord agreed to distribute the remaining funding to schools with first-time principals (those with 3 years or less experience). An ERO¹ report at the end of 2021 identified workload pressures and particular challenges experienced by new principals. We expect this group is significantly impacted by the ongoing disruption of Covid-19.
- The decision to distribute funding for schools with new principals was informed by:
 - COVID-19 outbreaks nationwide continuing to require principals to navigate the challenges of leading schools through the ongoing pandemic and deliver quality education for learners.
 - consistent messaging from the sector to provide additional discretionary funding to schools and kura. This is needed to ease workload pressures and address negative impacts on principals' wellbeing.
 - an expectation that the removal of mandates will increase complexity of managing staffing decision for principals.

¹ [Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Teachers and Principals | Education Review Office \(ero.govt.nz\)](https://www.ero.govt.nz/review-summaries/learning-in-a-covid-19-world-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-teachers-and-principals) (6 December 2021)

- Subject to your approval, the Ministry will deliver this funding to schools' operational funding accounts, provide a package of wraparound support to ensure the appropriate use of the funds and communicate this support to the sector.

Recommended actions

The Ministry recommends that you:

- a) **note** the Ministry has ~\$5.7m of unallocated funds of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund available to use for education workforce wellbeing for FY2021/22.

Noted

- b) **agree** for the Ministry to target first-time principals with 3 years or less experience and distribute the ~\$5.7m across these eligible schools.

Agree / Disagree

- c) **agree** to proactively release this report.

Agree / Disagree



Anna Welanyk
Te Puna Ohumahi Mātauranga

08/04/2022



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

11/ 4/ 2022

Background

1. In May 2020, as part of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF), Cabinet agreed to support education workforce mental health and wellbeing in response to COVID-19. This resulted in a funding allocation of \$15.988m over three years. An initial package of wellbeing initiatives was subsequently developed in concert with the Accord and agreed by you in September 2020 [METIS 1240426 refers].
2. The package included EAP counselling services in Auckland, contingency funding to enable immediate delivery of EAP in locations or regions experiencing further resurgence, as well as longer term initiatives including a wellbeing online hub (now discontinued) and support for the Māori medium education workforce.
3. The Ministry has been working with the Accord to agree options for further wellbeing initiatives. EAP services are currently being deployed nationally until June 2022, and an EAP preventative wellbeing programme will be commencing in Term 2.
4. On 5 April, the Accord met to discuss an approach to respond to the urgent need for wellbeing support for new principals. They agreed to distribute funding directly to schools with first-time principals.
5. The Ministry has ~\$5.7m of CRRF funds remaining for distribution to support workforce wellbeing in this financial year. Your approval is sought for the Ministry to use the remaining funds for this initiative.

Wellbeing support for first-time principals

6. We recommend distributing funding across schools and kura with first-time principals. Providing additional funding now will enable principals to address their immediate needs and invest in wellbeing support for their school community at this critical time.
7. This will send a signal to the workforce that we value principals' resilience and recognise that principals' wellbeing has a significant impact on the entire school community even though the impact of this one-off funding will be limited.

Rationale for targeting first-time principals

8. First-time principals are facing the additional challenges of being new to principalship and having to lead school staff through the complex challenges caused by the COVID-19 disruption. As identified in the recent ERO report, a lack of effective peer support has contributed to disproportioned workload pressures and feelings of isolation among new principals.
9. Principals could use this funding for short-term administrative support to ease workload pressures or seek assistance with school planning. We would also encourage principals to use the funding to directly address their wellbeing needs and support wellbeing of staff, for example by providing release time or resilience training.
10. We considered a range of other distribution models. We dismissed targeting funding to schools that are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 due to their roll size, decile, or region as well as distributing funding equally across all schools. Focusing on first-time principals allows us to avoid a possible perception of 'winners and losers' and show that we support principals' wellbeing so that they can continue to effectively support teachers, learners, and their community.

Distributing the funding to first-time principals

11. We define first-time principals as those with 3 years or less experience of being a principal (as opposed to less than 3 years tenure in their current principal position). We considered three years to be an appropriate threshold because:
 - a. it is a timeframe that captures all those entered their first principal position between the three years of the pandemic 2020 to 2022
 - b. results in a reasonable number of schools to benefit from the funds; and
 - c. represents a good distribution across school types and regions.A table in **Appendix 1** shows the breakdown of eligible schools by school type and region.
12. There are around **524 schools with principals who meet this definition**. Distributing the available ~\$5.7m of wellbeing funding across these schools would result in a funding amount of **~\$11,000 per eligible school**.

Communications

13. We will work with the Accord partners and Te Mahau regional directors to distribute messaging about the establishment and purpose of the funding to the sector.
14. Following your approval to this proposal, eligible schools will be notified in advance of receiving the funds. This will ensure these schools can take the additional funding into consideration as they plan for the rest of the school year.
15. The funding will come with a package of support. This package will include clear guidance on scope and examples for the appropriate use of the funds. Ultimately, the decision around how the funds are used to support wellbeing sits with the school board.
16. We will be asking school boards to let us know how they have used the funds. This information will be captured via a simple feedback mechanism. Feedback will help to create insights and inform further work. We considered more formal reporting but dismissed this to avoid further adding to principal workload.

Financial implications

17. The cost of this initiative is fiscally neutral. The 2021/22 funding in the CRRF wellbeing workforce budget is \$8.7m. The Ministry confirms that there is ~\$5.7m unallocated funds within this baseline to fund this initiative.
18. There are no other viable plans to spend this funding before the end of this financial year. The Ministry has extended EAP counselling to June 2022 and developed a preventative wellbeing programme for teachers and principals in schools and kura.

Next steps

19. Subject to your approval, we will progress the delivery of the funding via the Ministry's operational bulk funding mechanism, together with the guidance package and related communications. We are planning to release funding to eligible schools before the end of May.
20. We will liaise with your office on planned communications to the sector.

21. The Ministry continues to explore opportunities such as improving professional connectedness and thinking more strategically about workforce wellbeing to inform wider policy direction outside of the COVID-19 context. Funding for any identified solutions will be taken from next year's allocated wellbeing budget.

Proactive release

22. It is intended that this document is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible but only after it has been communicated to schools. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Appendix 1

The tables below show the number of schools with first-time principals with 3 years or less experience of being a principal.

Table 1: number of schools with first-time principals by school type

By School type	Number of schools with first-time principals
area/composite	33
intermediate	16
secondary	80
specialist	6
primary	389
Grand Total	524

Table 2: number of schools with first-time principals by region

By Region	Number of schools with first-time principals
Auckland	91
Bay of Plenty	40
Canterbury	52
Hawkes Bay	43
Nelson	29
Otago	63
Tai Tokerau	28
Waikato	55
Wellington	64
Whanganui	59
Grand Total	524