

## Briefing Note: Background information on the Urgent Response Fund process

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	10 February 2021	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1249708
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

### Purpose of paper

This paper provides background information on the Urgent Response Fund (URF), which was established in May 2020 by the Minister of Education, including:

- how the URF is administered by the Ministry of Education,
- the region-based process in place with the sector for identifying priorities and approving URF applications,
- a summary of the latest progress on the URF, and;
- next steps for reporting on the URF.

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released.

Agree  Disagree

### Summary

- Regional sector groups and Directors of Education are continuing to liaise with their communities about local needs, including emergent needs, and best responses.
- From 4 August 2020 to 27 January 2021, 66% of the \$50 million URF has been allocated.
- We report on URF activity fortnightly through the Education Weekly Update and monthly through Briefing Notes.

  
Katrina Casey  
Deputy Secretary  
Sector Enablement & Support

10/02/2021

  
Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of Education

12/02/2021

## Background

1. On 11 May 2020, Cabinet agreed to a Wellbeing Budget package of initiatives for the education sector to support the wellbeing of learners, their family and whānau and school staff in the wake of COVID-19.
2. 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.
3. The fund is available to schools, kura, and early learning services me ngā kōhangā reo to help address attendance issues, and support wellbeing, cultural wellbeing and re-engagement in learning.

### Regional funding allocation

4. The Ministry applied the Equity Index to distribute the URF to regions. The Equity Index (EQI) measures the extent to which socio-economic factors are present in the lives of children that could affect their education. It allocates more funding to regions with relatively higher levels of disadvantage, where the impact of COVID-19 on wellbeing, attendance, and engagement will be most significant.
5. The regional allocation of the URF in 2020/21 is shown in the table below:

Education region	\$ m
Tai Tokerau	2.90
Auckland	14.51
Waikato	5.25
Bay of Plenty, Waikato	4.43
Hawke's Bay, Tairāwhiti	3.34
Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatū	3.99
Wellington	5.25
Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast	1.86
Canterbury, Chatham Islands	5.22
Otago, Southland	3.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>50.00</b>

### Regional decision making

6. Responsibility for the allocation of the fund has been delegated to the Directors of Education in the Ministry's ten regions.
7. Local knowledge and priorities underpin decisions about the use of URF funding. One or more regional groups<sup>1</sup> are working with the Director in each region to determine how the funding can best support the attendance, engagement, and wellbeing issues of children and young people in the regions.
8. Regional groups and Directors received guidance on what the URF can be used for, and a list of these can be found in Annex 1.
9. There are variations as to how regions approach their decision making on URF applications. However, to enable funding to flow quickly, most regional decisions on small grants (typically, less than \$20,000) are made by the Director, reserving the regional group's scrutiny for the more substantial applications.

<sup>1</sup> Regional groups include representation from primary and secondary schools, kura, early learning services me ngā kōhangā reo, and mana whenua.

10. Typically, the regional groups are meeting fortnightly, in person or remotely, to set priorities, make decisions on new applications, and for an update on application decisions to date.

## Monitoring and reporting on progress

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### Reports being produced regularly

11. We produce regular reports to update the Minister of Education, you and other Associate Ministers on the progress of implementing the URF and the needs being identified and supported.
12. Monthly national URF allocation summary dashboards provide an overview of URF allocation to date, as well as information about allocation by decile/EQI rating, priority learners and attendance data.
13. Annex 2 includes the most recent three national dashboards [METIS 1242528, 1244130 and 1245690 refers].
14. As part of the monthly reporting, we also provide examples of need and interventions from URF applications. Annex 3 provides examples of needs and interventions included in URF applications from the December update on the Urgent Response Fund (COVID-19) [METIS 1245690 refers].
15. Since September 2020, we have been providing fortnightly updates through the Education Weekly Update on the number and value of approved applications, and number of learners supported, by sector (schools/kura and early learning services/kōhanga reo).

### Interim Outcomes Survey

16. On 18 November 2020, the URF Interim Outcomes Survey (IOS) was sent to 1,087 schools, kura and early learning centres me ngā kōhanga reo with approved URF applications for which they received URF funding before the start of term 4.
17. The IOS captures information about the progress being made by the schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo in delivering the URF, and the interim outcomes that have been achieved. The purpose of the IOS was to:
  - a. evaluate and report on the effectiveness of the URF;
  - b. to inform and support Ministry planning for learners, schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo; and
  - c. inform future decisions at both national and regional level about the URF.
18. The survey formally closed on 11 December 2020, at which point we had more than a 50% response rate.
19. We are currently analysing the responses and an Education Report on the outcomes of the survey is due in late February 2021.
20. The IOS report will detail what schools, kura, and early learning centres me ngā kōhanga reo have told us about their experience in implementing URF support. This includes their observed impact of the URF on attendance, engagement and wellbeing, and challenges that they may have experienced.

## Current status of the URF

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21. Since 4 August 2020, when online applications began, to 27 January 2021 \$32.8 m (66%) of the URF has been allocated through the online application process.<sup>2</sup> This leaves a total of \$17.1 million (34% of the fund) remaining for the period to 30 June 2021 for regions to allocate.
22. The table below shows key metrics for the URF as at 27 January:

Key metrics	To 27/01/2021
<b>Applications</b>	
Pipeline - total submitted applications	5,413
Total approved applications *	3,492
Number of ākonga supported	375,296
Number of schools and kura supported * <sup>^</sup>	1,607
Number of early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo supported * <sup>^</sup>	684
<b>Approved Funds</b>	
Total funding approved for schools and kura	\$28,379,349
Total funding approved for early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo	\$4,385,004
Total funding approved	\$32,764,353
% total funds allocated	66%

\*URF data is from main applicant and therefore does not take account of schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo which are funded via the main applicant as part of a cluster.

<sup>^</sup> As schools/early learning services can submit multiple applications, the number of schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo supported does not sum to the number of applications.

## Next steps

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23. We will provide the next monthly update on the URF on 17 February 2021. This will provide you with information on the progress of the URF in December 2020 and January 2021.
24. The Education report on the IOS will be provided to the Minister of Education and Associate Ministers of Education on 25 February 2021.

## Proactive release

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25. 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.

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<sup>2</sup> \$0.1 m was allocated through a paper-based process from 1 July 2020 to 3 August 2020

## Annexes

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Annex 1: Guidance – list of what the URF can and cannot be used for

Annex 2: National summary of URF allocation:

- COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND – Summary of URF allocation (4 August to 30 September) [METIS 1242528 refers];
- COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND – Summary of URF allocation (4 August to 28 October) [METIS 1244130 refers]; and
- COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND – Summary of URF allocation (4 August to 25 November) [METIS 1245690 refers]

Annex 3: Examples of needs and interventions (from applications approved 28 October to 25 November 2020) [METIS 1245690 refers]

## Annex 1: Guidance – list of what the URF can and cannot be used for

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### **The URF can be used for:**

- Support for clusters to work together to identify and respond to the changing needs of individual learners and groups of learners, to enable sustained improvements in attendance and re-engagement with learning
- Additional teacher time or teacher release to directly support sustainable increases in children and young people's attendance, re-engagement with learning, and wellbeing
- Support that has a wellbeing focus targeting individuals, groups, a class, a whole school or kura or early learning service me ngā kōhangā reo, or a cluster
- Resources or materials for improving children and young people's wellbeing, including reducing stress, anxiety, depression and grief
- Community support which is child-focused and can be delivered by the school or service, such as before or after school care
- Additional support for learners with mild to moderate, to high and complex needs, including those who are neurodiverse and gifted
- Catch-up access, small group tutoring
- Mentors, counsellors, behaviour support workers
- Professional advice (psychologists, counsellors etc.) on individual or whole of-class responses to children or young people's needs
- Additional teacher aide time

### **The URF cannot be used for:**

- Professional Learning and Development
- Leadership support or staff wellbeing
- Grants to support a shortfall in funding, or supporting ongoing activities of schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhangā reo that would be reasonably expected to be covered through existing funding.
- Capital expenses, including maintenance and improvements for school or centre infrastructure
- Support that the Ministry is supposed to provide
- Additional ORS places
- Responses that extend past 30 June 2021
- Welfare, such as food or clothing
- The cost of trips or excursions that were cancelled because of COVID-19
- Support that is provided or funded by other government agencies
- Payment of parent fees contribution to early learning services
- Costs associated with cleaning
- Devices, monitors and associated equipment.

The fund can be used for responses to attendance, re-engagement and related wellbeing needs for:

- individual learners
- a group or groups of learners
- a class
- an entire school, kura, early learning service, or kōhangā reo
- a cluster of schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhangā reo.

# 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 kōhangae 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

40% of the 3,741 submitted applications have been approved.

## Pipeline of URF applications

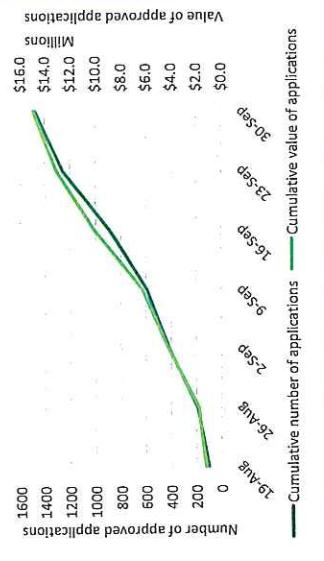


In Auckland, the number of approved applications was distributed evenly across three main areas of need, however almost half of the funding was to support needs related to attendance.



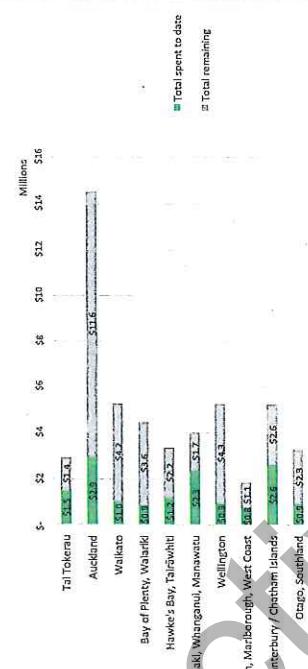
The number of new applications being approved each week peaked in the weeks of 16 and 23 September 2020.

## URF weekly approvals (cumulative)

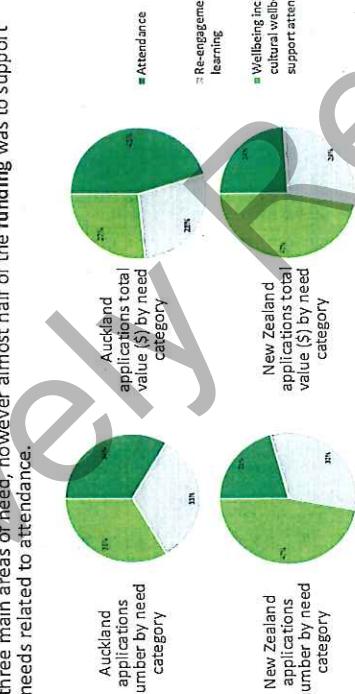


Nationally, 30% of the URF has been allocated to early learning services me ngā kōhangae reo, schools and kura. Within Auckland, 20% of the region's funding (\$2.9m) has been allocated

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

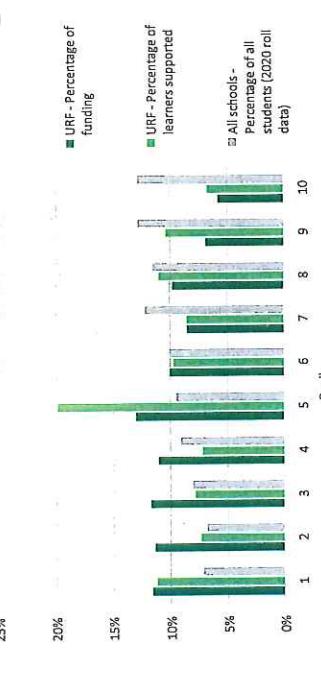


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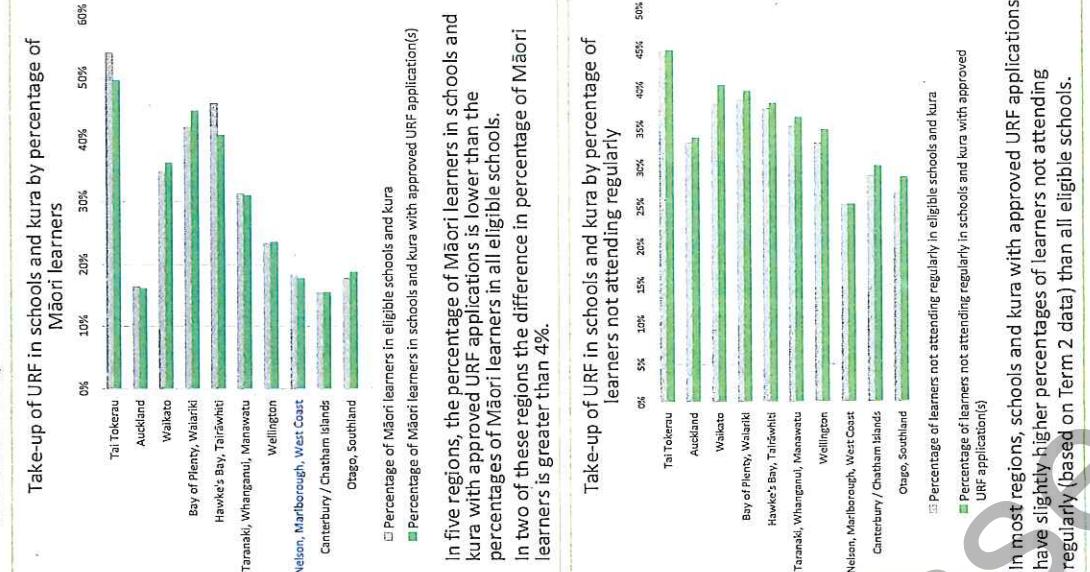
Schools and kura in lower deciles are relatively well represented in the proportion of URF funding they have received and the number of learners supported. Note: The spike in the percentage of learners being supported in decile 5 is due to five large, cluster based applications which account for almost 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.



**Notes:**  
School Roll data is from July 2020 roll numbers 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 data collection. This data is provided on 88% 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 – National summary of URF allocation

(4 August to 28 October 2020)

We have approved 2,394 applications to the URF totalling \$22.9m. The URF is currently supporting 274,110 learners, more than 130,000 of whom are in Auckland.

### Early learning services me nāgā kōhanga reo

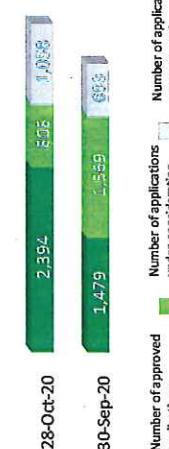
- 25,357 learners supported across 333 services
- 407 approved applications, valued at \$2.4m
- Average funding of \$96 per learner

### Schools and kura

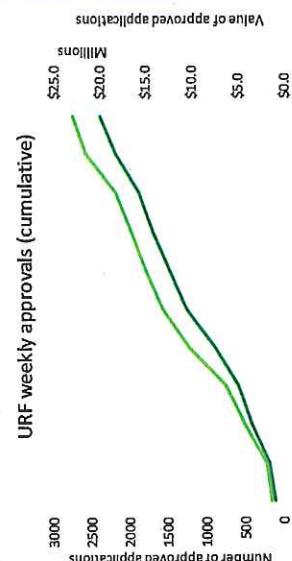
- 248,813 learners supported across 1,340 schools
- 1,987 approved applications valued at \$20.5m
- Average funding of \$82 per learner

56% of the 4,260 submitted applications have been approved.

### Pipeline of URF applications



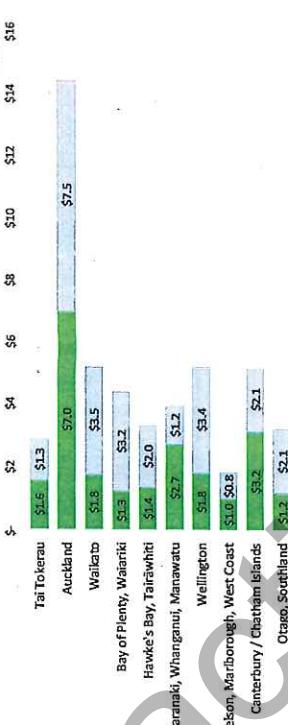
Both the number and value of applications approved has increased steadily over time.



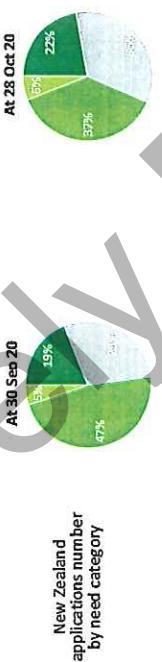
A significant proportion of schools and kura in lower deciles have not yet accessed URF funding. We will prioritise contact with these schools and kura.

Nationally, 46% of the URF has been allocated. For the period 30 September to 28 October 2020, Auckland spent 28% (\$4.1m) of its \$14.5m allocation.

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



While the URF at 28 October continues to have a strong focus on needs related to Wellbeing to support attendance, the number and value of applications in the three other needs categories has increased, as a proportion.



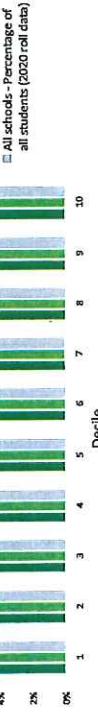
New Zealand applications number by need category

### Distribution of URF in schools and kura by percentage of learners not attending regularly



The percentage of Māori learners in schools and kura which have approved URF applications has increased since 30 September in eight out of ten regions.

### Distribution of URF in schools and kura by percentage of learners not attending regularly

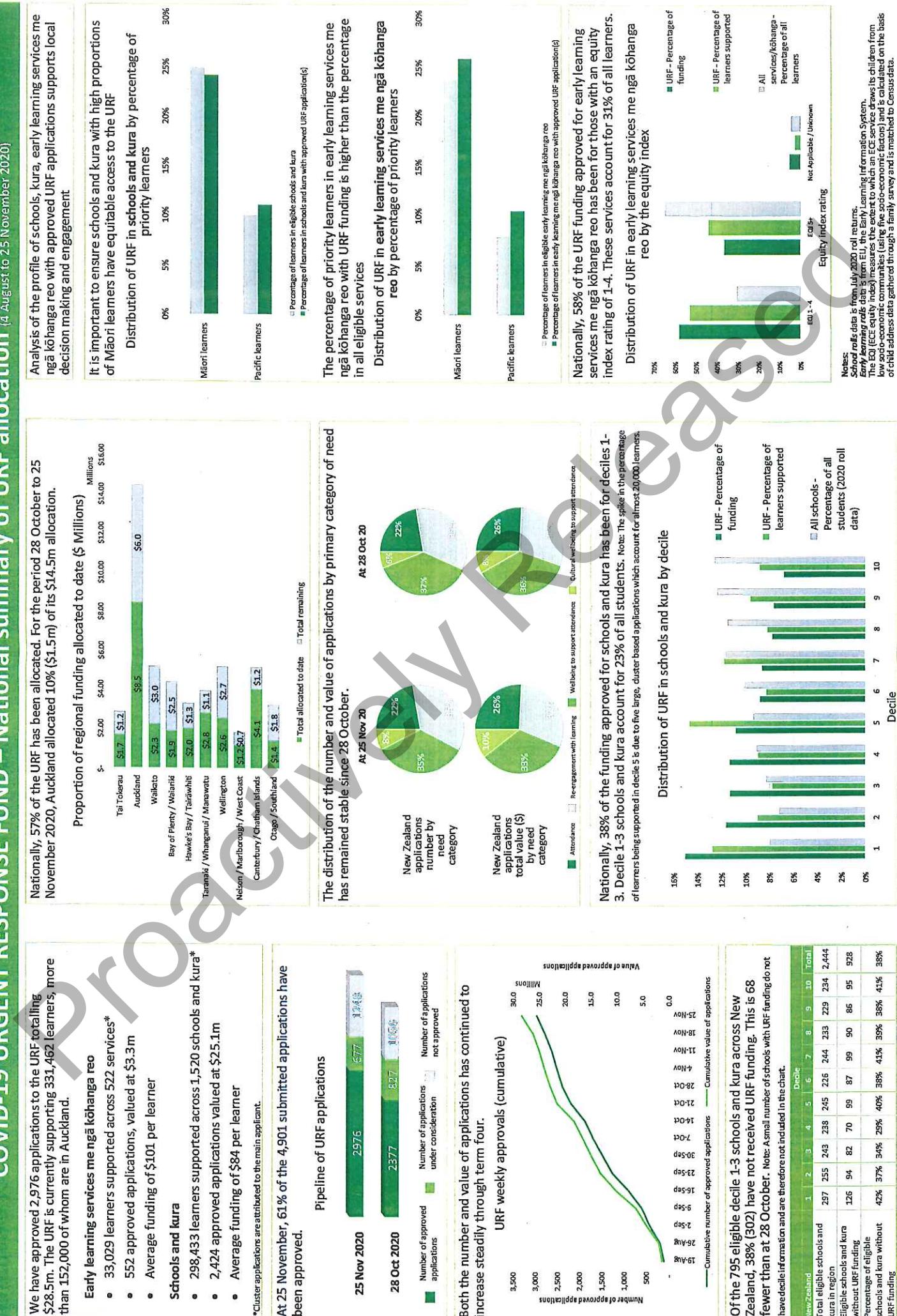


Notes:

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Attendance data is from Term 2 of 2020 at 16 September 2020. This is only for the 7 post-lockdown weeks of Term 2 and provided prior to finalisation of the 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 – National summary of URF allocation



## COVID-19 Urgent Response Fund – Examples of needs and interventions (from applications approved 28 October – 25 November)

### Attendance

#### Wellbeing to support attendance

##### Early learning

A group of early learning centres in the Hawke's Bay have experienced a decline in enrolments and attendance. They are seeing whānau in their community unable to engage and build meaningful relationships with the centres. Some whānau had to relocate because of financial hardships and some have experienced a breakdown of relationships at home. Parents are looking to the centres for support to help their tamariki cope with mental health, social and emotional wellbeing issues at home. The centres recognise that whānau will be comfortable in participating in early learning when they feel supported. The centres want to reconnect with whānau in their community to build a network of support, and to build whānaungatanga to develop a sense of belonging within the community. They intend to employ a local facilitator to work across the centres to provide support to whānau to strengthen the relationships between homes, the community and the centres, with a view to increasing attendance.

##### Primary and secondary

##### Primary and secondary

A Tai Tokerau school catering for years 1 to 13 has experienced a decline in students attending regularly because of students and their whānau experiencing anxiety due to COVID-19. While teachers are doing their best to keep students engaged in learning, the underlying anxiety that the school community feels has reduced attendance. The school created a wellbeing programme for students during breaktimes to promote positive relationships, participation and physical education. The URF will fund a sensory space set up for students to use any time during the day to reduce feelings of anxiety. It will also fund a teacher aide employed to help implement the programme alongside their SENCO team.

A secondary school in the Bay of Plenty has a Māori immersion unit that supports transitions for their Māori students. COVID-19 has made it difficult for the school to keep students engaged and attending school regularly within the immersion unit. Students feel that they are not connected with the wider school community. The school will employ a kaiawhina to support students in creating and maintaining connections with the wider school community, and to support them with their transition between year levels.

### Re-engagement with learning

##### Early learning

In Auckland, some tamariki have found it difficult to feel settled, secure and confident in an early learning centre coming back from lockdown. Tamariki attach themselves to certain kaiako and are displaying behavioural difficulties. The centre intends to support the social, emotional and behavioural wellbeing of tamariki by employing a teacher aide to develop more quality one-to-one interactions.

##### Primary and secondary

In Tauranga, a primary school is facing challenges with students experiencing anxiety. Students have difficulty self-regulating and are displaying negative behaviours as a result of the anxiety. The school intends to use additional teacher aides to help students feel secure and develop resiliency skills.

An intermediate school in Wellington is seeing an increase in the number of students who are experiencing stress, anxiety, lack of social skills, depression and suicidal thoughts. The school recognised that attendance and engagements has been impacted by COVID-19. The school wants to be proactive in reducing wellbeing issues, and they are intending to implement a programme that allows students to have a wellbeing check-in so they can communicate how they feel and why they are feeling that way. They also want to invest in an online wellbeing tool to promote resiliency skills within students.

A secondary school in Wellington is seeing an increase in demand for counselling support from their school guidance counsellor. Students are reporting high levels of anxiety, depression, and issues with relationship breakdowns at home. There is also an increase of referrals coming from whānau, and parents are looking to the school to gain strategies to support their children at home. The school referred some students to local counselling organisations to deal with the increase in counselling demand within their school community. The school intends to employ an additional counsellor to support a whole-school wellbeing initiative, and to provide more targeted support to students.

### Cultural wellbeing to support attendance

##### Early learning

In Gisborne, a group of kindergartens are seeing stressed and anxious parents of tamariki. The kindergartens also see that tamariki, over half of whom are Māori, feel disconnected from their cultural identity and language. It is important to build an understanding of their own heritage and identity at an early stage, and this feeling of disconnection increases the anxiety that whānau feel. The kindergartens are intending to employ a kaiarahi reo to work directly with tamariki and their whānau to support to reo, build partnerships with the community, and support transitions to kura.

##### Primary and secondary

A primary school in Waikato saw an increase in disengagement from their Māori ākonga and whānau following the lockdown. The school recognises that there is a need to build relationships with whānau and to strengthen the cultural identity of ākonga to support engagement in learning. The school intends to employ four Māori mentors to support the cultural identity of their Māori ākonga by teaching them about tikanga and mahi toi. The mentors will work with whānau to build a sense of belonging in the wider school community. The school also sees this as an opportunity to build stronger relationships with local iwi.

In Wellington, a secondary school is holding a camp for Year 9 to 13 Pacific students to build a sense of belonging, and to promote engagement in learning. The camp will focus on a range of areas, from building relationships to learning cultural dance. It will provide a forum to get NCEA support for those requiring additional credits and will also use guest speakers to help build pathways towards STEM industries.