



Briefing Note: February update 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	17 February 2021	Priority	Medium
Security Level	In Confidence	METIS No	1249648
Drafter	Laura Stokes	DDI	s 9(2)(a)
Key Contact	Susan Howan	DDI	
Messaging seen by Communications team	No	Round Robin	No

Purpose of Report

This report updates you on the Urgent Response Fund (URF), including:

- analysis of the distribution of funding to date
- an update on the URF interim outcomes survey.

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released.


☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**

Summary

- The URF provides \$50 million in 2020/21 to support children and young people's attendance, re-engagement with learning and wellbeing following the COVID-19 lockdowns. \$32.8 million of URF funding has been distributed to date.
- This update covers a two-month period (from 26 November 2020 to 27 January 2021) which includes the Christmas shut down and summer break.
- We will provide a report on the URF interim outcomes survey on 25 February 2021.


Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement & Support

17 / 2 / 2021


Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

15 / 3 / 21

Background

1. The Urgent Response Fund (URF) provides \$50 million in 2020/21 to support children and young people's attendance, re-engagement with learning and wellbeing after the COVID-19 lockdowns.
2. We have used the Equity Index (EQI) to allocate the URF funding to regions¹. The regional Directors of Education approve applications, working with regional sector groups, to ensure that local knowledge and priorities inform funding decisions.
3. This update follows previous monthly reports since September² and fortnightly updates in the Education Weekly Update (EWU).

Allocation of URF funding to 27 January 2021

Key URF metrics to 27 January 2021

4. Annex 1 provides a national summary of the allocation of URF funding to 27 January 2021. We have approved 3,492 applications to the URF totalling \$32.8 million. This includes 3,218 applications totalling \$30.7 million up to the end of December 2020.
5. This update covers a two-month period (26 November 2020 to 27 January 2021) which includes the Christmas shut down and summer break. While the data is not directly comparable to the previous reporting period (28 October to 25 November 2020), we have included comparisons for context.
6. We have approved 518 applications valued at \$4.3 million since 26 November 2020 [METIS 1245690 refers]. These 518 applications together support 43,924 ākonga. In the previous period, 583 applications valued at \$5.6 million were approved.
7. At 27 January, 13% of the funding to date has been allocated to early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo. This is an increase of 1% from 12% at 25 November 2020.
8. The URF continues to be an important part of the response to COVID-19 disruption to schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo in Auckland. The Auckland region has allocated 65% of its funds. In Auckland, 77% of eligible schools and kura³ have received URF funding compared with 66% nationally.
9. From 26 November 2020, the total number of new URF applications submitted each week has remained stable and below 160. This compares to a peak of over 800 in a single week at the end of August. Schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo submitted 516 new URF applications since 26 November, compared with just over 600 in the previous update. This brings the total number of applications submitted at 27 January 2021 to 5,414.
10. Of the 5,414 applications submitted, 64% have been approved (up from 61% at 25 November). Regional sector groups and Ministry regional staff continue to support the sector to put in well considered applications which meet the scope of the fund⁴. Feedback from regions is that applications are becoming more targeted to identified needs.

¹ The Equity Index weights funding to regions with relatively higher levels of disadvantage, where the impact of COVID-19 on wellbeing, attendance, and engagement will be most significant.

² METIS 1239151, 1242528, 1244130 and 1245690 refer. No report was provided in January 2021.

³ Eligible schools and kura includes state schools, state integrated schools, ngā kura kaupapa Māori, ngā Kura a Iwi, specialist schools.

⁴ Where an application is out of scope, or needs an amendment, regional staff work closely with the applicant to help them to refocus their application and resubmit if needed.

Schools and kura in receipt of URF funding

11. Each month, we analyse the profile of the schools and kura with approved URF applications. This is shown in Annex 1. Profile data is used to support local decision making and identify opportunities for directing the URF to areas of greatest need.
12. Overall, low decile schools and kura, and their ākonga, are well represented in the proportion of URF funding received. There are however still a significant proportion of low decile schools and kura that have not yet accessed support through the URF, including 40% of decile 1 schools.
13. Nationally, the percentage of Māori learners in schools and kura with approved URF applications is slightly lower than the percentage of Māori learners in all eligible schools and kura. In comparison, the percentage of Pacific learners in schools and kura with approved URF applications is slightly higher than the percentage of Pacific learners in all eligible schools and kura.
14. Regional staff are actively working with schools and kura to ensure the URF is reaching priority learners. We will continue to use regional channels to engage low decile schools and kura and those with high proportions of priority learners (particularly Māori learners) to ensure they are aware of the URF and are supported to apply where need exists.
15. The Ministry is currently preparing a report on the latest attendance data and will report to you on this shortly. Once available we will use the attendance data to analyse the distribution of the URF. This will inform regional engagement with schools and kura.

Early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo in receipt of URF funding

16. In Annex 1 we have included an analysis of the profile of early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with approved URF applications.
17. Nationally, the percentage of both Māori and Pacific learners in early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo which have approved URF applications is higher than the percentage of Māori and Pacific learners in all eligible early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo.
18. Early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with an EQI rating of 1-4 are receiving a higher proportion of URF funding than those with a rating of 5+⁵. To date, 55% of the funding to the early learning sector has gone to organisations with an EQI rating of 1-4, while only 31% of learners are enrolled in these services.
19. Maintaining a focus on early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with high proportions of priority learners and low EQI ratings will continue to be important through the allocation of the URF.

Understanding the impact of the URF

20. In November and December 2020, we ran an online interim outcomes survey with the education providers that received URF funding by the start of term four. We asked

⁵ The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Service EQI measures the extent to which an ECE service draws its children from low socio-economic communities (using five socio-economic factors). It is calculated on the basis of child address data gathered through a family survey and is matched to Census data. ECE Services (including kōhanga reo) with an EQI between 1 and 4 are eligible for Equity Funding.

1,081⁶ schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo to report back on their progress in using the URF and the difference being made for ākonga.

21. As reported recently in EWU, respondents were asked about each application which had been funded:
- For over 80% of applications, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their organisation has achieved (or will likely achieve) the outcomes they set out to achieve with the funding.
 - For over 80% of applications, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that learners supported showed improved re-engagement with learning.
 - For over 80% of applications, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that learners supported showed improved wellbeing.
22. We will provide a report on the URF interim outcomes survey on 25 February 2021.

Next Steps

23. We will continue to update you fortnightly in the EWU on key metrics for the URF, and monthly through these Briefing Notes for the remainder of the fund.

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: National summary of URF allocation (4 August 2020 to 27 January 2021)

⁶ We previously reported a slightly higher number of institutions. A small number of institutions received more than one survey invite where they had multiple funded applications, with different contact details listed for each.

COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND – National summary of URF allocation (4 August 2020 to 27 January 2021)

We have approved 3,492 applications to the URF totalling \$32.8m. The URF is currently supporting 375,296 learners, more than 161,000 of whom are in Auckland.

Early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo

- 39,624 learners supported across 684 services*
- 723 approved applications, valued at \$4.4m
- Average funding of \$111 per learner

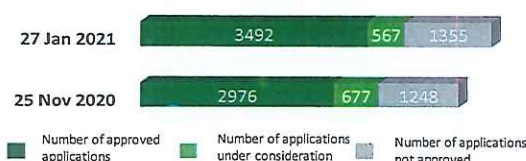
Schools and kura

- 335,672 learners supported across 1,607 schools and kura*
- 2,769 approved applications valued at \$28.4m
- Average funding of \$85 per learner

*Cluster applications are attributed to the main applicant.

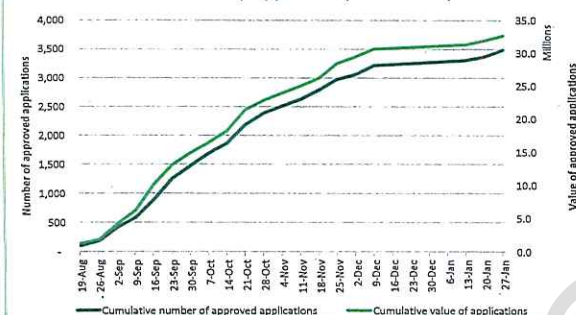
At 27 January, 64% of the 5,414 submitted applications have been approved.

Pipeline of URF applications



Both the number and total value of applications has continued to increase steadily through term four, but has plateaued from 9 December 2020, as expected because of the Christmas shutdown and summer break.

URF weekly approvals (cumulative)



Of the 795 eligible decile 1-3 schools and kura across New Zealand, 35% (277) have not received URF funding. This is 25 fewer than at 25 November. Note: A small number of schools with URF funding do not have decile information and are therefore not included in the chart.

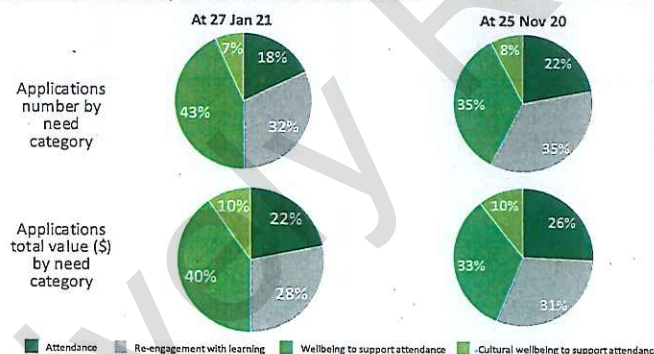
	Decile										Total
New Zealand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Total eligible schools and kura in region	297	255	243	238	245	226	244	233	229	234	2,444
Eligible schools and kura without URF funding	119	85	73	60	91	77	92	83	80	81	841
Percentage of eligible schools and kura without URF funding	40%	33%	30%	25%	37%	34%	38%	36%	35%	35%	34%

Nationally, 66% of the URF has been allocated. For the period 25 November 2020 to 27 January 2021, Auckland allocated 7% (\$0.97m) of its \$14.5m allocation.

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

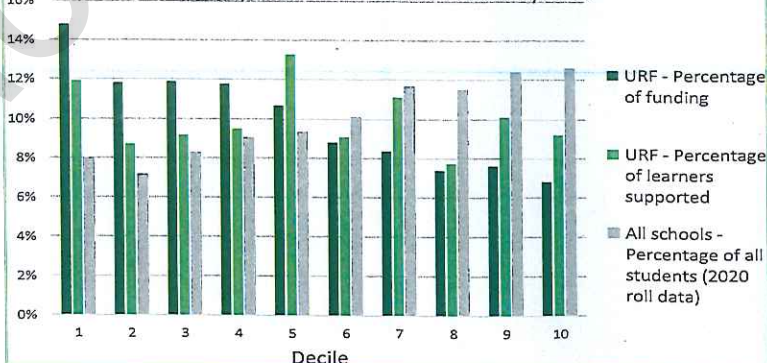


The distribution of the number and value of applications by primary category of need has remained relatively stable since 25 November.



Nationally, 39% of the URF funding approved for schools and kura has been for deciles 1-3. Decile 1-3 schools and kura account for 23% of all students. 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.

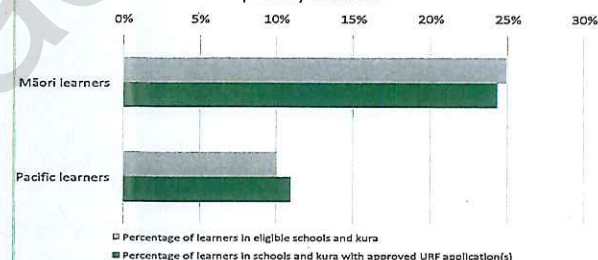
Distribution of URF in schools and kura by decile



Analysis of the profile of schools, kura, early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with approved URF applications supports local decision making and engagement.

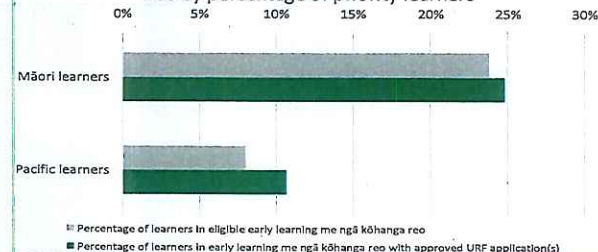
The percentage of Māori learners in schools and kura with URF funding is slightly lower than the percentage of all eligible schools. The percentage of Pacific learners in schools and kura with URF funding is higher than the percentage in all eligible schools and kura.

Distribution of URF in schools and kura by percentage of priority learners



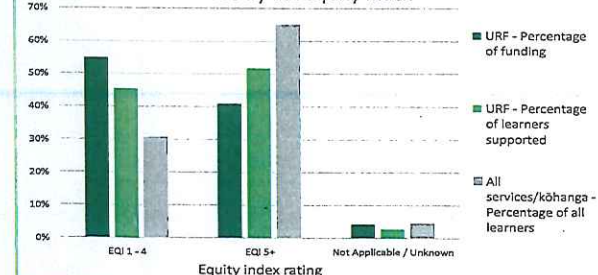
The percentage of priority learners in early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with URF funding is higher than the percentage in all eligible services.

Distribution of URF in early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo by percentage of priority learners



Nationally, 55% of the URF funding approved for early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo has been for those with an equity index rating of 1-4. These services account for 31% of all learners.

Distribution of URF in early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo by the equity index



Notes:
School rolls data is from July 2020 roll returns.
Early learning rolls data is from ELI, the Early Learning Information System, from September 2020.
The EQI (ECE equity index) measures the extent to which an ECE service draws its children from low socio-economic communities (using five socio-economic factors) and is calculated on the basis of child address data gathered through a family survey and is matched to Census data.