



Briefing Note: Report on the Urgent Response Fund Outcomes Survey

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		
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Purpose of paper

This paper provides you with the findings from the Urgent Response Fund (URF) Outcomes Survey.

It summarises the lessons from these findings and the analysis of the distribution of the URF to inform planning for learners and decisions about future funding of this nature.

Note the findings from the URF Outcomes Survey.

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released.

☒ **Agree** / ☐ **Disagree**



Sean Teddy
Hautū | Deputy Secretary
Te Pae Aronui



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

8/02/22

___/___/___ 23/3/2022

Summary

- The URF Outcomes Survey ('the survey') was completed by 871 schools, kura and early learning services. It captures information about the delivery of the URF and outcomes achieved from the perspective of the respondent.
- While this is not a formal evaluation of the URF, the findings in this report alongside previous analysis of the distribution of the URF [METIS 1265323 refers] can inform planning for learners and decisions about future funding of this nature.
- Overall, the findings of the survey are positive and show that, for most respondents, support achieved the intended outcomes for learners across all four areas of need¹.
- Lessons from the URF have informed our responses to the resurgence of COVID-19 in Auckland and will support our work ongoing.

Background

Urgent Response Fund

1. The URF was a contestable fund that provided \$50 million in 2020/21 to support children and young people who needed extra help after the COVID-19 lockdowns.
2. The fund was available to schools, kura, and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo² to help address attendance issues and support wellbeing, cultural wellbeing and re-engagement in learning.
3. We used the Equity Index to allocate the URF funding to regions.³ The regional Directors of Education approved applications, working with regional advisory groups⁴ to ensure that local knowledge and priorities informed funding decisions.

URF Outcomes Survey

4. We conducted the online URF Outcomes Survey ('the survey') to capture information from schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that received funding on their experience of the URF and how it contributed to learners' attendance, wellbeing, cultural wellbeing and engagement.
5. The survey was based on the URF - Interim Outcomes Survey conducted in late 2020, with additional questions on outstanding need and support.
6. An invitation to complete the survey was emailed on 4 August 2021 to all 2,760 schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with approved URF

¹The four primary categories of need were attendance, re-engagement in learning, wellbeing and cultural wellbeing.

²The fund was available to:

- Licensed early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo: play centre, ngā puna reo, kindergarten, education & care services (including casual) and home-based early learning services (excluding au pair).
- Schools and kura: state schools, state integrated schools, ngā kura kaupapa Māori, ngā Kura a Iwi, specialist schools.

³The 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.

⁴Regional advisory groups include representation from primary and secondary schools, kura, early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo, and mana whenua.

applications⁵. The email included a Te Reo Māori foreword and whakataukī to explain the purpose of the survey. It also consulted on the proactive release of 2021 URF funding data⁶.

7. Ministry regional staff had planned to follow-up during the live survey period with principals and tumuaki with whom they had existing relationships to support and encourage responses. This approach was intended to ensure the survey captured the breadth of URF experiences.
8. The timing of the onset of the current Delta outbreak and national level 4 restrictions meant that Ministry regional staff did not undertake the planned engagement and follow-up activity. Advice from Ministry regional staff was that principals and tumuaki were managing multiple urgent priorities during this time and it was therefore not appropriate for us to engage with them on the survey unless they requested assistance.
9. In addition to the formal survey responses, we also received feedback through two virtual kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) conversations. Insights from these conversations are included in this report.
10. The information provided in the survey responses is from the perspective of the person completing the survey⁷ and may be subject to self-rater bias. We did not seek direct input from learners, whānau, teachers or other staff to minimise burdens on the sector. The findings presented in this report have therefore not been validated against a second data source.

The URF, te Tiriti o Waitangi and Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia

11. We did not undertake a dedicated analysis against Te Tiriti o Waitangi or Tau Mai Te Reo as part of the design and implementation planning for the URF. The URF also commenced before the refreshed Ka Hikitia became available. We did however seek to uphold our obligations under Te Tiriti by involving mana whenua at a regional level, including regional priority setting and decision making.
12. There are examples in this and previous reports of how the URF supported Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitai outcome domains, which we have sought to identify. In particular we can see how the URF was used to respond to the diverse needs of ākonga Māori (Te Kanorautanga), support cultural wellbeing through identity, language and culture (Te Tuakiritanga) and consider ākonga in the context of their whānau (Te Whānau).
13. While these examples are positive, Māori voice in our outcome findings remains relatively limited and the responses we do have recognise the challenges for ākonga Māori and their kaiako and tumuaki in accessing the URF. We have included specific considerations for future work in our 'Lessons' section (paras 58-60).

⁵ Institutions that received funding before 4 August 2020 through paper-based applications were not included in this process. This funding totals \$0.2 million.

⁶ This data was published on 9 December 2021 on the Ministry website <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/information-releases/issue-specific-releases/urgent-response-fund/>

⁷ Surveys were sent to the principal or tumuaki for schools and kura, or the funding contact for early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo. Respondents attested to having authority from the tumuaki | principal or early learning equivalent in their response.

Overview of survey findings

14. The findings from the survey are summarised in this report. This overview of findings should be read alongside the Data Overview (Annex 1), Examples of ākonga, whānau and kaiako voice (Annex 2) and Vignettes (Annex 3).
15. While not a formal evaluation of the URF, these findings can inform design, planning and implementation of future initiatives.

Who responded to the survey?

16. Overall, 871 (32%) of the education institutions that received URF funding responded to the survey. The 871 responses represent 1,694 applications⁸ with a total value of \$16.0 million, supporting a total of 82,941 learners. This contrasts with the Interim Outcomes Survey⁹ in which 638 (59%) of those surveyed completed a response.
17. The response rate for schools and kura was higher (34%) than for early learning services (27%).
18. For the 34% of schools and kura that responded:
 - deciles 8-10 (36%) and 4-7 (35%) were more likely to have responded than deciles 1-3 (31%)
 - primary (35%) and contributing schools (38%) were more likely to have responded than secondary (30%) and intermediate schools (27%).
19. For the 27% of early learning services that responded:
 - services with an EQI rating of 5+ (30%) were more likely to have responded than services with an EQI rating of 1-4 (24%).
 - education and care services (31%) and playcentre (54%) were more likely to respond than kindergarten (26%) and home-based services (24%).
20. The response rate for Māori medium and Māori language in English medium¹⁰ was 20% and 37% respectively. This is a very small sample size for Māori medium particularly (14), and so we cannot presume the findings reflect all the experiences of this group.
21. No survey responses were received from kōhanga reo. Instead, Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust provided feedback on behalf of their members through a kanohi ki te kanohi conversation.
22. As described in paragraph 7 the intention to use existing local relationships to connect with non-respondents, including those from Māori medium settings, was impacted by the Delta Outbreak which occurred in the middle of the live survey period. Overall, 55% of respondents submitted their response before the lockdown commenced on 18 August 2021.

⁸ Only one survey was completed by each education institution, regardless of the number of funded applications.

⁹ The Interim Outcome Survey was run from 18 November 2020 to 11 December 2020, and was sent to 1081 schools, kura, early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo who had URF funding at the time.

¹⁰ See "Māori Language in Education" on the Education Counts website for more information on the types of Māori language education in New Zealand: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/directories/maori-medium-schools>

Key findings

Respondents reported that their learners supported showed improvements in re-engagement in learning, wellbeing, and cultural wellbeing.

23. Overwhelmingly, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that learners supported showed improved re-engagement in learning (93%) and wellbeing (92%). Over two thirds of respondents (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that learners supported by the funding showed improved cultural wellbeing.
24. Early learning respondents were slightly more likely to strongly agree across all categories than schools and kura.
25. A high proportion of respondents saw improvements for learners across all categories rather than just the primary category of need the application was made for. This indicates that the benefits of the URF support were not limited to the particular need being addressed, but instead contributed more broadly to outcomes for learners. For example, only 26% respondents identified re-engagement with learning as the primary category of need for one or more of their funding applications¹¹ (compared with 93% who agreed or strongly agreed that learners showed improvements in this area).
26. The findings related to improvements in cultural wellbeing (which for 12% of respondents was the primary category of need for one or more of their funded applications) also support the anecdotal view, based on application data, that responses funded by the URF valued the identity, language, culture of learners, particularly priority learners and the Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia outcome domain of Te Tuakiritanga.

The vast majority of respondents consider they had or would likely achieve their intended outcomes for their learners.

27. As part of the application process, applicants were asked to describe the outcomes or sustainable benefits they intended to achieve from the support, and how they intended to measure these. In total, 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had or would likely achieve their intended outcomes from the URF funding.
28. The intended outcomes described as part of the application process were more specific than the four broad Ministry categories of attendance, re-engagement in learning, wellbeing and cultural wellbeing, and often considered learners in the context of their whānau and community. For example, to increase learners' ability to self-regulate and rebuild trust and connections with whānau after lockdown. In this way, this measure links to both Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia outcome domains of Te Whānau and Te Kanorautanga.

The URF supported priority learners.

29. The proportion of ākonga Māori and Pacific learners supported by the URF was higher than both the proportion of Māori and Pacific learners on respondents' rolls and the proportion nationally. This is a good outcome and suggests schools, kura and early

¹¹ Some respondents can be linked to multiple primary categories of need because of multiple funded applications.

learning services were successful at ensuring support reached priority learners through implementation.

30. Respondents told us that 21% of learners supported by the URF had existing support needs. There is no comprehensive data on learning support needs, though the Learning Support Action Plan 2019-2025 states that one in five children and young people need some kind of extra support for their learning.

Respondents reported improvements in the regular attendance of learners.

31. Respondents reported higher levels of regular attendance¹² immediately after support being provided, for the learners supported, when compared to after the first COVID-19 lockdown and prior to the support being provided.
32. Overall regular attendance rates were higher for early learning services than for schools and kura. According to respondents, early learning services experienced a greater drop in regular attendance after lockdown and a corresponding uplift after the URF support was provided.
33. The improvements in attendance for the learners supported by the URF were sustained through to the time of the survey for respondents from both early learning services and schools and kura.
34. While these findings should be viewed within the context of national attendance patterns post COVID-19¹³ and we cannot attribute causation of the increases in attendance for this group of learners to the URF, the attendance data provided by survey respondents aligns to the shifts in attendance we were aiming to see from the URF.

Funding was commonly used to fund teacher aides.

35. Almost two thirds of schools and kura (64%) and 40% of early learning services that responded used the URF funding for teacher aides¹⁴. Teacher aides were used in a variety of ways, including to provide the support itself, as well as work alongside other professionals, such as experienced teachers.
36. Wellbeing/hauora was also a common category, selected by 52% of schools and kura and 40% of early learning services.
37. Overall, the range of supports funded by schools and kura was broader than for early learning services. This is understandable as schools and kura cater to a larger cohort spanning a wider range of ages.

The majority of respondents found the process of applying for the URF easy.

38. Respondents were asked to reflect on the application experience. The overall response was positive, with 62% rating their experience easy or very easy, and a further 27% finding it neither easy nor difficult.

¹² Regular attendance is defined as “attendance of greater than 90% of the time” for schools and kura; and “attendance greater than 90% of ‘normal attendance’” for early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo.

¹³ National levels of regular attendance at schools and kura were 2020 Term 3 (63.5%), Term 4 (61.7%), 2021 Term 1 (68.5%) and Term 2 (59.7%)

¹⁴ Directors of Education worked with regional advisory groups to ensure URF funding did not cover need that was eligible for ORS COVID-19 Response Funding and other COVID response funds, as these funds came on stream through Term 3.

39. The respondents that commented on needing assistance to complete the application were generally very positive about the engagement with regional Ministry staff.

"It felt like there was a greater partnership through this process - greater trust and genuine awareness of need."

40. A small proportion of respondents found the process difficult (9%) or very difficult (2%), most of whom chose to comment in the free text field provided. The most common issue described related to the navigation of the application platform.

There were implementation challenges for some.

41. While the application process was straightforward, four in ten respondents experienced one or more challenges in implementing the URF. Challenges were slightly more likely for schools and kura than early learning services (42% compared with 35%).

42. Given the high proportion of respondents using the URF for teacher aides and teachers, it may be expected that finding a suitable member of staff was the most common challenge, with 19% of schools and kura and 13% of early learning service respondents experiencing this.

43. Respondents identified contributing factors as the importance of getting the *right* person for the role, recruiting in rural and isolated communities and using short-term time limited funding for staffing.

"Initially the literacy intervention was difficult to staff. It was important that the right staff member was found and given the nature of the intervention they had to have excellent ability to engage children."

"Six months projects are difficult for employing additional staff when you don't have the skills or time already on the staff."

44. Whānau and learner engagement issues were the second most common challenge overall, experienced by 16% of schools and kura, though only 9% of early learning services.

45. While a small sample size, several respondents from Māori Medium Kura reported difficulty in finding Te Reo Māori capability within the staff or services being provided through the URF.

"The main issue is the lack of available personnel who can provide a range of services through the medium of te reo, i.e. counsellors, youth workers, social workers, whānau advocates etc. There doesn't seem to be a place where Māori Medium Kura like mine can go to for the support we need."

The majority of respondents identified ongoing needs for learners post URF.

46. Over two thirds of respondents (68%) stated that the needs of learners at their education institution relating to attendance, re-engagement in learning or wellbeing would not end once funding was exhausted. This was more common for schools and kura (74%) than early learning services (50%).

47. Respondents who submitted their survey responses after the national level 4 lockdown was announced were more likely to identify ongoing need than those who submitted before 18 August 2020 (72% compared with 64%).
48. Respondents who chose to describe the ongoing needs, commonly cited wider social issues exacerbated by COVID-19 as causing significant disruption in the lives of learners and their whānau. Issues related to housing, employment, whānau health and wellbeing, and uncertainty about the future all featured in these responses.

“We know after the Covid lockdowns that some families are reluctant to send their children back to school for fear of transmission. These are families who have multiple families living in a single dwelling with elderly relatives or whānau members who have impaired health. For other families lack of attendance is due to practical concerns e.g. parents working multiple jobs or long shifts who find it difficult to see their children off to school.”

Support provided by URF is likely to continue after 30 June 2021.

49. When asked whether respondents intended to continue elements of the URF support provided after the funding period ended, using alternative sources of funding; 69% of respondents agreed and 18% were not sure. The proportion intending to continue was higher for schools and kura (74%) than for early learning services (57%).
50. For the 164 respondents that used the free text field to indicate the alternative funding sources, two thirds specified school-sourced funding including Operational Grant funding and Board of Trustees funding. A further 16% intended to fundraise, either from parent-led activities, or from external sources such as sponsors or community grants.
51. At the time of the survey, only 64% respondents had completed implementation of URF support (60% of schools and kura and 68% of early learning services), which is much lower than expected. It is not clear whether the intent of this question was interpreted consistently by respondents or was affected by the 69% of respondents intending to continue elements of the URF support provided using alternative funding.

Illustrating the experience of supporting Ākonga Māori

52. In addition to the survey we held two separate kōrero kanohi ki te kanohi to provide insights on the use of the URF for Ākonga Māori within Māori medium. The first was with a Tumuaki of a kura and the second was with two regional representatives of Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust.

Experience of a Tumuaki of a kura

The Tumuaki of a kura is a sector leader and was a member of the URF regional advisory group. Through a korero kanohi ki te kanohi the Tumuaki shared their breadth of insights from the URF experience of both receiving funding in their kura and regional coordination.

The Tumuaki had chosen to engage in decision making through their membership of their regional advisory group to provide a Te Ao Māori perspective. Once on the group, they also worked across the region to amplify minority voices in the URF process, including those from refugee and migrant communities.

In our discussion, the Tumuaki recognised the strong and inclusive leadership of their regional Director and the focus on equity that grew as the regional advisory group matured. They reflected that this positive experience was not necessarily shared by their colleagues in other regions. The Tumuaki also described some of the challenges they experienced in operating in an environment which was set up to 'serve the mainstream' and the ways in which Māori medium pathways are always having to navigate this.

Examples of these challenges included the communications, criteria and guidelines not reflecting a Te Ao Māori context, meaning the Māori medium sector did not recognise that they could or should apply for this funding. For this reason, it took more direct and targeted engagement from the regional office to ensure that Māori medium early learning services, schools and kura, were supported to apply for funding. The Tumuaki recognised that this put pressure on local Ministry staffing resources, as well as Māori medium education providers themselves. This feedback provides us with further insight that the URF may not have immediately met the needs of ākonga Māori and their whānau [METIS 1265323 refers].

The Tumuaki also spoke of the difficulty in overcoming historical mistrust, for example, in funding and accountability relationships, as well as the need for priority and minority learner voices to be deliberately supported to enable equitable distribution of funding due to isolation or lack of engagement barriers. The Tumuaki commented that investing in relationships, engaging with and strengthening the connections between those that are underserved or not well represented are ways to mitigate the effects of this.

More positively, we heard from the Tumuaki how the flexibility in how the URF was implemented at a school and kura level and the high trust model were strengths of the URF that supported equity. It allowed for kura to use elders who were qualified from a Māori perspective where whānau were not trusting of the agencies commonly providing counselling support.

Experience of Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust

We requested an opportunity to kōrero kanohi ki te kanohi with Te Kōhanga Reo Trust representatives to discuss the URF and their experience of it across their settings. The kōrero took place virtually in January 2022 with two lead representatives, one from Te Waipounamu and the other from Tāmaki Makaurau. The representative from Tāmaki Makaurau was also on their URF regional advisory group.

For ngā kōhanga reo in Te Waipounamu, the fund was used to employ a support person to work with whānau and kaiako to create a smooth transition process for tamariki between settings. This role worked with new entrant teachers to help them identify and understand the environment and kaupapa that tamariki had come from and tailor the transition to accommodate those differences. In one kōhanga reo, the URF funding helped meet the needs of a group of boys by providing one on one support which led to decreased COVID-19 anxiety and anxiety-related behaviours presenting at kōhanga reo and home.

The kōhanga reo representative for Tāmaki Makaurau, described how participating in the URF regional advisory group helped strengthened relationships with the Ministry, cross-sector, cross agency and community groups to be responsive to the needs of the region as a whole. The group brought primary and secondary school principals, Kura Kaupapa Māori settings and early childhood education sector leaders together as a collective. This meant they were able to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 in education and within the communities of Tāmaki Makaurau, and to make decisions about how best to address and meet those needs. The Ministry of Education team enabled and encouraged kōhanga reo to look higher and more broadly when making applications for this fund beyond 'business as usual' and with a lens to remove barriers and improve access to their service for mokopuna and their whānau.

In respect of challenges, we heard from the representatives that criteria for access to the fund was considered too strict and unrealistic and did not provide support in areas where it was most needed such as transport, devices and online data costs for kaiako and whānau. It was noted that criteria needed to only ask what extra support was required with a focus on taking the stress off whānau during the lockdowns to support their health and wellbeing.

One key point that came though the discussion was that, for kōhanga reo, the diversity of districts needed to be recognised through "treating us all the same because of our common philosophy but recognising how different we are by our communities' needs". It was important that, for ngā kōhanga reo, "one size does not fit all".

Lessons from the URF Outcomes Survey findings and distribution

53. The implementation of the URF in August 2020 was driven by the need to respond widely and urgently, in an emerging COVID-19 environment without placing unnecessary demands on the sector. In this context, we placed a strong emphasis on acting quickly, delegating decisions closer to learners, and using data, local relationships and feedback loops to inform adjustments through the implementation.
54. For respondents overall, the URF is considered to have had a positive impact on the attendance, re-engagement in learning, wellbeing and cultural wellbeing of the learners supported. What is more, the early learning services, schools and kura that responded reported that they achieved their intended outcomes or sustainable benefits.
55. There are however lessons from these findings (including the kanohi ki te kanohi conversations), and the analysis of the distribution of the URF that can inform design, planning and implementation of future initiatives.

A flexible, high trust approach is valued

56. The survey responses build on the feedback from the regional advisory groups [METIS 1265323 refers] that the URF provided the chance for schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo to 'solve their own problems' and demonstrate innovation.

"Getting this URF funding was a game changer, particularly as it was self-managed and got the initiatives and resources to the right spot when needed."

57. The range of responses and careful design to meet the specific needs of learners within the context of their whānau and communities are far beyond any support the Ministry would have been able to offer. Coupled with a local approach to decision making, the flexibility of the URF should be considered a strength that can be replicated.

Equity needs to be part of the design from the start

58. For any new initiative, equity for learners and our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, need to be designed into the end-to-end process, from conception to implementation. Given the URF was contestable funding with a universal reach, the opportunities for systemic inequity through designing for 'the mainstream' were high.
59. The refreshed Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia was not available at the time the URF was established but provides a framework to support the design of future funding. Specific activities consistent with a Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia approach could include:
 - a. co-designing the application process with mana whenua, Iwi partners and Pacific leaders to better reflect Te Ao Māori and diverse Pacific approaches
 - b. providing funding to resource the engagement with priority groups through existing relationships as part of implementation approach
 - c. ring-fencing funding for priority learners, as part of regional distribution (this was done in some regions but not all)
 - d. supporting and amplifying minority voices in decision making, rather than relying on a small proportion of representatives

- e. identifying and removing criteria and guidelines that limit access, especially kaupapa Māori approaches, and supporting an approach which is 'beyond business as usual'
 - f. ensuring data on access and outcomes for ākonga Māori is collected from the start of implementation to monitor and protect against systemic discrimination
 - g. including approaches to identifying and measuring outcomes for Māori to achieving educational success as Māori.
60. We will only be able to meet the diverse needs of ākonga Māori and their whānau by a true partnership approach that starts at the beginning. For future work, it will be important to do a specific Te Tiriti and Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia analysis as part of the the national and regional design phase, incorporating the lessons learnt from the URF.

The right platform and technology will enhance the user experience

61. The Ministry had limited platform options available to us at the time the URF was set up due to the urgency of the fund. We understood the challenges presented by the selected platform and sought to mitigate these as far as possible.
62. Significant development of a more suitable platform has taken place since August 2020 that can be utilised for future funds.

Collecting data on individual learners may add value to understanding distribution and impact

63. Due to the platform limitations, privacy and security considerations and the demands on the sector at the time of implementation, we chose not to collect NSN numbers for learners supported by the URF.
64. While data on individual learners could provide more insights on who was intended to be supported compared with those actually supported and the impact for those learners (for example through student-level attendance data), these benefits would have to be balanced against the risks and administrative costs to the Ministry and the sector.
65. For example, there is a risk we would focus on what we are able to measure over more nuanced indicators of performance, such as those related to wellbeing. In addition, some communities wanting to access support may be uncomfortable with how data is, or perceived to be, used by the Ministry.

Next Steps

66. The Ministry has taken a range of approaches to sector involvement and decision making in the design and delivery of the Budget 2020 COVID-19 response funds, which includes but is not limited to the URF. As our response to the changing context of COVID-19 becomes integrated within our business as usual, we want to learn from the URF experience to ensure we continue effective approaches and make ongoing improvements in how we work in partnership with the sector as Te Mahau.
67. Experiences from the delivery of the URF informed our response to the 2021 resurgence of COVID-19 in Auckland. The distribution of the \$3m Rapid Resurgence Fund targeted state and state-integrated schools and kura that were identified as having the greatest needs. These kura and schools were identified using existing data

alongside local intelligence on the current impacts of COVID-19 on the communities they belong to. This removed the need to have an application process and meant funding could be distributed more quickly to respond to immediate and urgent need.

68. As well as the specific response in Auckland, experiences from the URF have informed our approach to sector-engagement and co-design across all regions. They will continue to reinforce and contribute to our progression into Te Mahau and support our work ongoing.

Proactive release

69. 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: COVID-19 Urgent Response Fund | Outcomes Survey – Data Overview (National and Auckland)
- Annex 2: COVID-19 Urgent Response Fund | Outcomes Survey – Examples of ākonga, whānau and kaiako voice
- Annex 3: Success and challenges in improving attendance using the URF (Vignettes)

COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND Outcomes Survey – Data Overview

Survey respondents

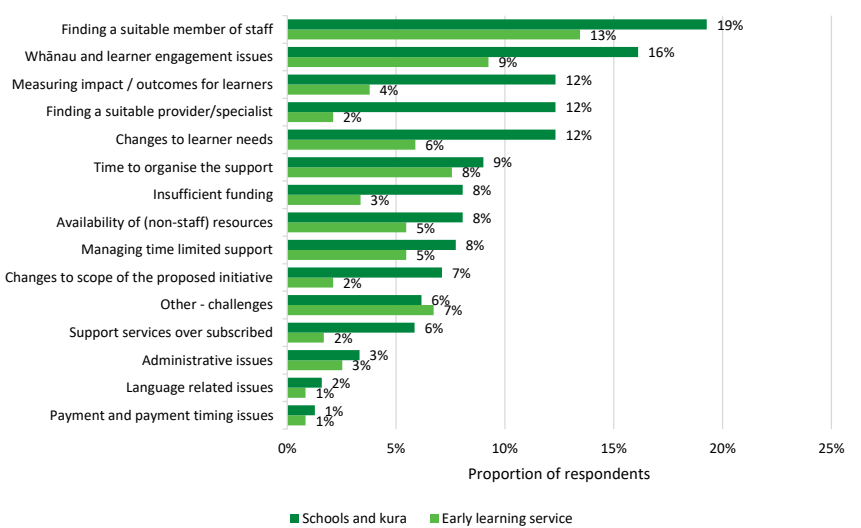
The URF Outcomes Survey was sent to 2,760 schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that received URF funding. The survey was conducted between 4 August and 24 September 2021.

Response rates were higher for schools and kura, than early learning services. No responses were received from kōhanga reo.

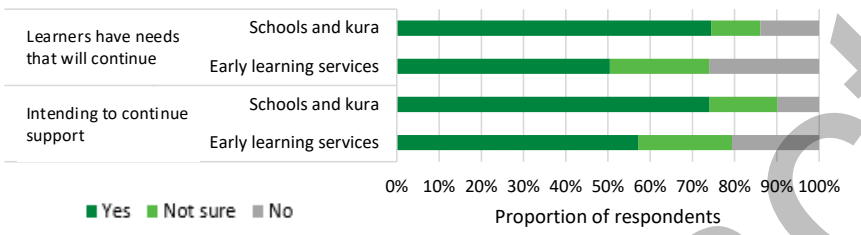
Responses by institution type	Invited	Value of applications	Responded	Value of applications	Response rate
Schools and kura	1862	\$43.1m	633	\$14.3m	34%
Early learning service me ngā kōhanga reo	898	\$6.7m	238	\$1.7m	27%
Total	2760	\$49.8m	871	\$16.0m	32%

Challenges in implementing support

40% of respondents told us they faced one or more challenges in implementing the URF support. Finding a suitable member of staff was the most common challenge (more than one option could be selected).



Outstanding need and support

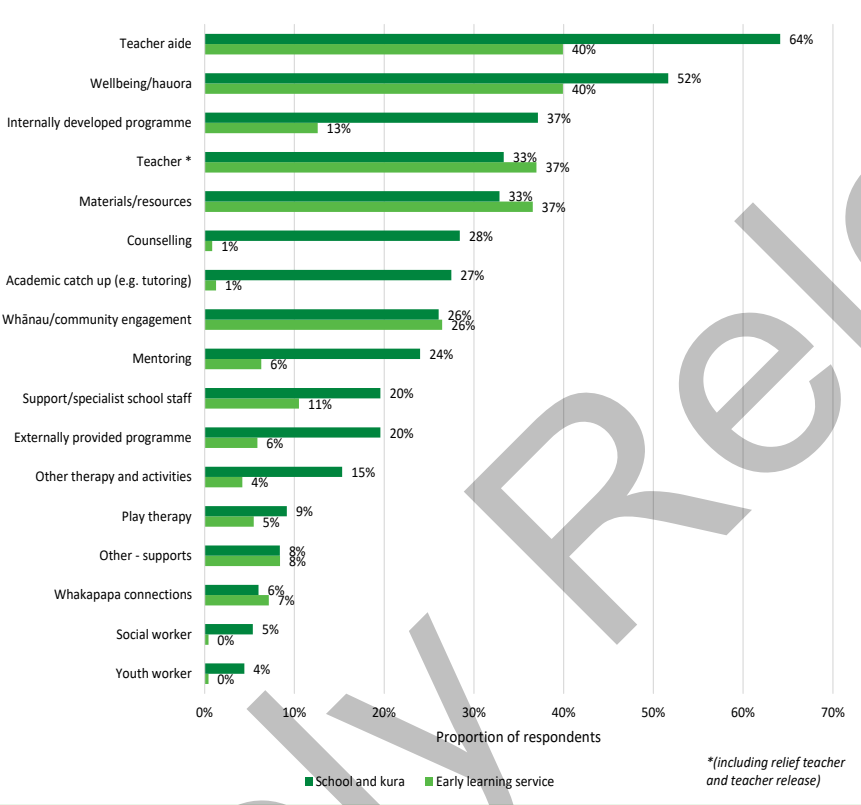


- Notes about respondents and responses:**
- Surveys were sent to the Principal(s)/Tumuaki of the schools and kura that received the funding, or the Funding Contact for early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo.
 - Respondents attested to having authority to respond on behalf of the institution.
 - Responses without a completed attestation and duplicate responses have been removed from the data. Invalid responses to specific questions have been removed from the data for that question.
 - Responses are subject to self-rater bias.
- Notes about attendance data:**
- No causality is implied between URF support and changes in attendance.
 - For schools and kura, regular attendance is attendance of greater than 90% of the time. For early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo, regular attendance is attendance greater than 90% of 'normal' attendance.
 - Respondents were given discretion as to the exact time period used for data they provided on regular attendance. Different time periods may have been used.
 - Proportions are calculated using the number of learners attending regularly divided by the number of learners supported by the fund for each application. The average is a mean, weighted to the number of learners in the sample size.

Types of support funded

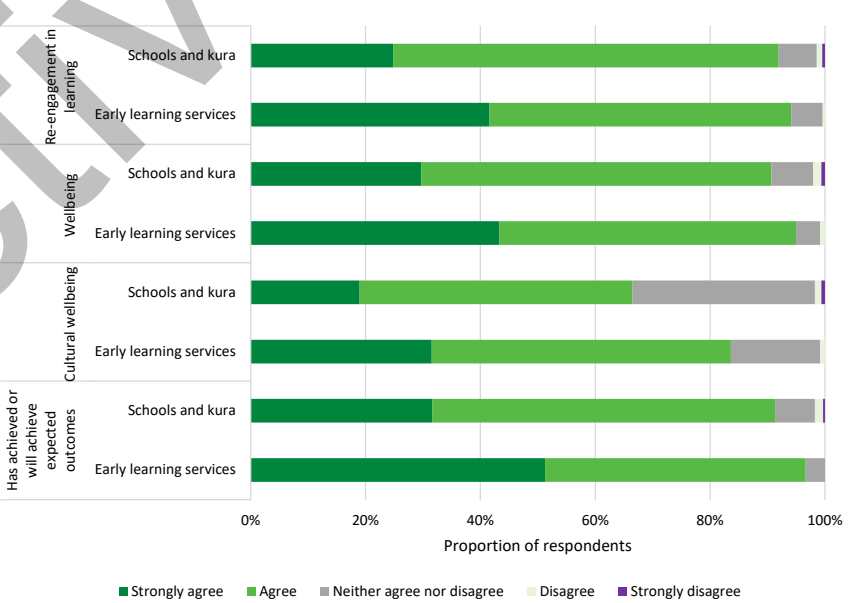
Respondents identified the different types of support funded (more than one option could be selected):

- 64% of **schools and kura** funded teacher aides
- 37% of **early learning services** funded teachers.



Outcomes achieved

The majority of respondents told us they agree or strongly agree that learners supported show improved re-engagement with learning, wellbeing and cultural wellbeing.

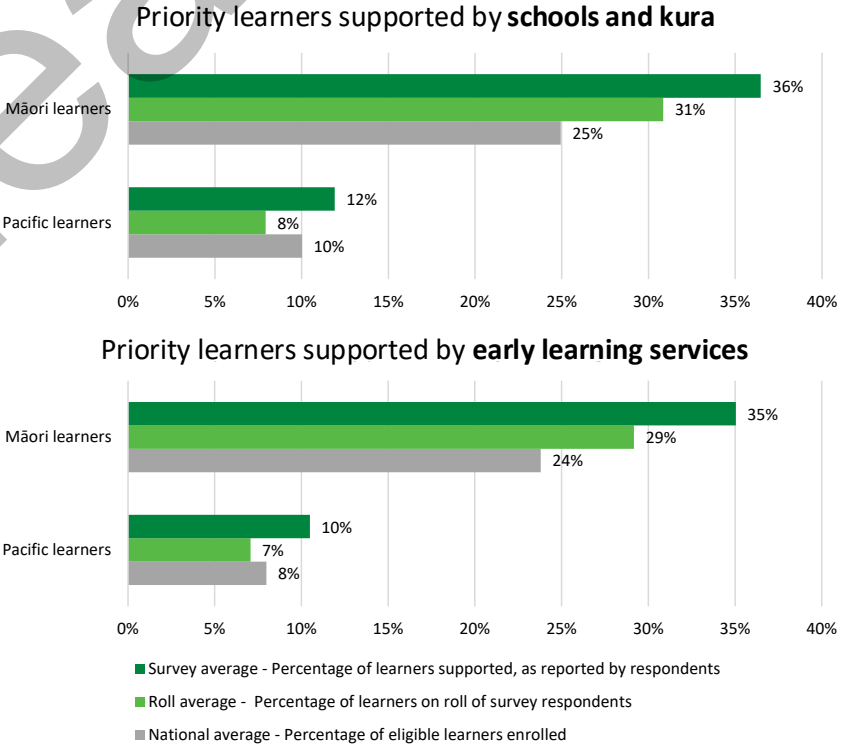


Learners supported

Respondents used the funding to support 82,941 learners – 30,129 (89%) of whom were supported by schools and kura.

The proportion of priority learners supported was higher than both the proportion of priority learners on respondents' rolls and the proportion nationally.

Respondents told us that 21% of learners supported had existing learning support needs.

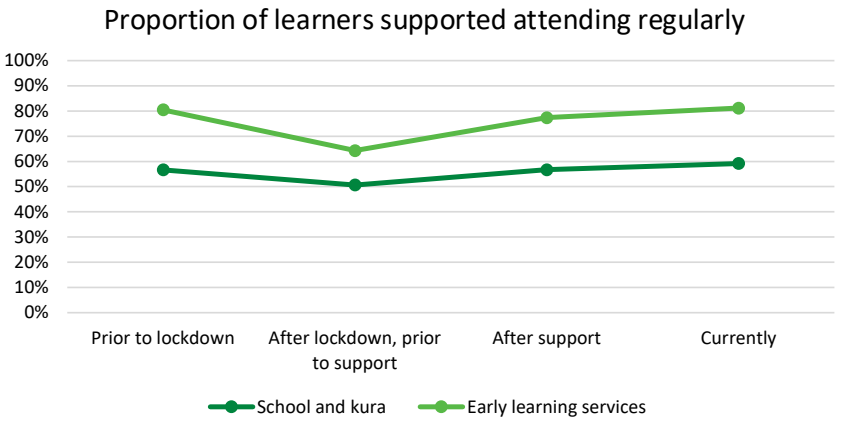


Attendance

Respondents indicated that, on average, learners supported by the URF:

- had lower proportions of 'regular' attendance after lockdown than prior to lockdown.
- the 'regular' attendance of these learners improved after support was provided and continued to the time of the survey

This could be observed for both schools and kura and early learning services.



COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND Outcomes Survey – Auckland Data Overview

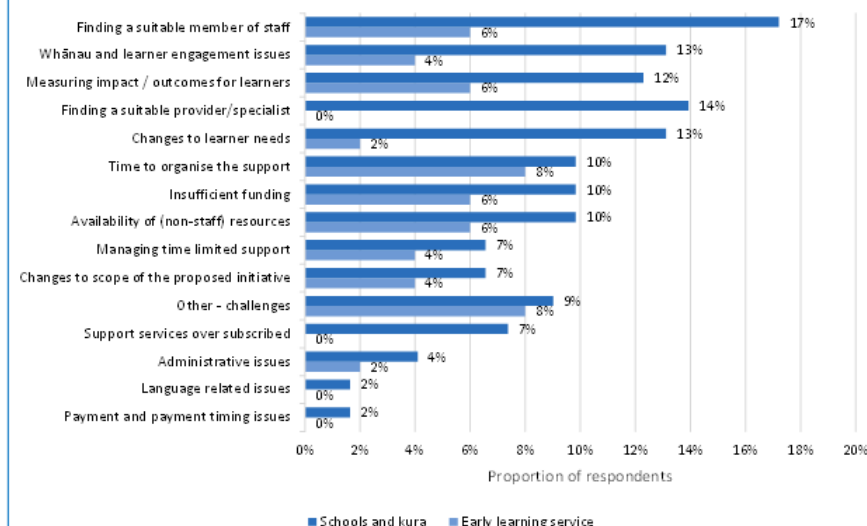
Survey respondents

The URF Outcomes Survey was sent to 672 schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo in the Auckland Region that received URF funding. The survey was conducted between 4 August and 24 September 2021. Response rates were higher for schools and kura, than early learning services.

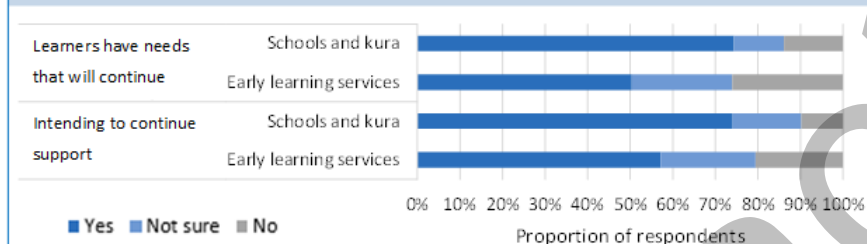
Responses by institution type	Invited	Value of applications	Responded	Value of applications	Response rate
Schools and kura	446	\$13.1m	124	\$3.2m	28%
Early learning service me ngā kōhanga reo	226	\$1.4m	50	\$0.1m	22%
Total	672	\$14.5m	174	\$3.3m	26%

Challenges in implementing support

In Auckland, 40% of respondents told us they faced one or more challenges in implementing the URF support. Finding a suitable member of staff was the most common challenge (more than one option could be selected).



Outstanding need and support



Notes about respondents and responses:

- Surveys were sent to the Principal(s)/Tumuaki of the schools and kura that received the funding, or the Funding Contact for early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo.
- Respondents attested to having authority to respond on behalf of the institution.
- Responses without a completed attestation and duplicate responses have been removed from the data. Invalid responses to specific questions have been removed from the data for that question.
- Responses are subject to self-rater bias.

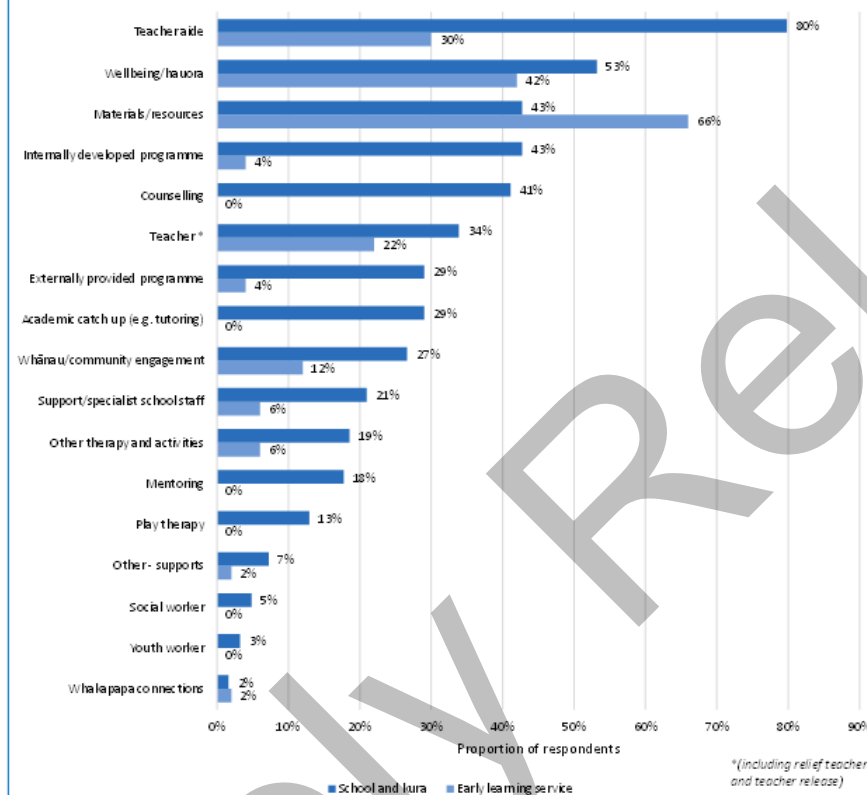
Notes about attendance data:

- No causality is implied between URF support and changes in attendance.
- For schools and kura, regular attendance is attendance of greater than 90% of the time. For early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo, regular attendance is attendance greater than 90% of 'normal' attendance.
- Respondents were given discretion as to the exact time period used for data they provided on regular attendance. Different time periods may have been used.
- Proportions are calculated using the number of learners attending regularly divided by the number of learners supported by the fund for each application. The average is a mean, weighted to the number of learners in the sample size.

Types of support funded

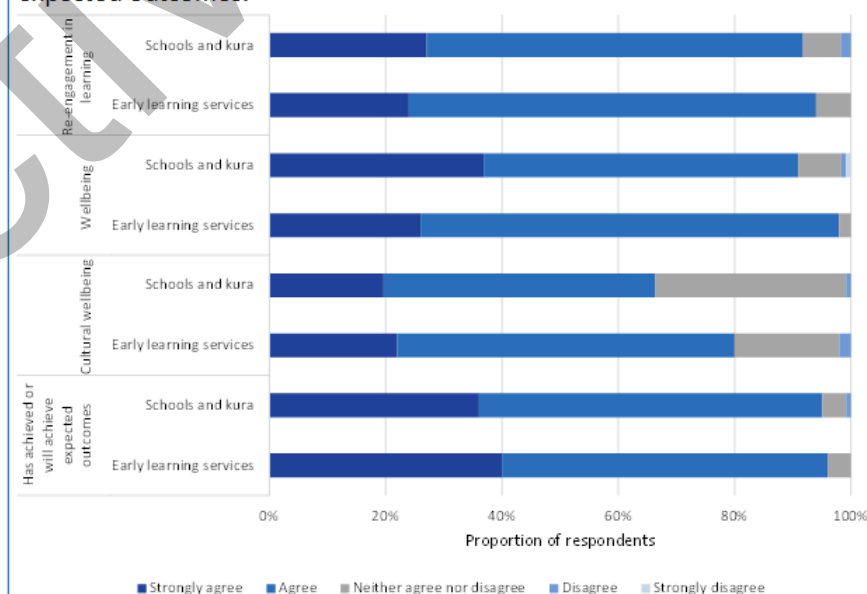
Respondents identified the different types of support funded (more than one option could be selected). In Auckland:

- 80% of **schools and kura** funded teacher aides
- 66% of **early learning services** materials and resources.



Outcomes achieved

The majority of respondents told us they agree or strongly agree that learners supported show improved re-engagement with learning, wellbeing and cultural wellbeing. Respondents overwhelmingly have or will achieve expected outcomes.



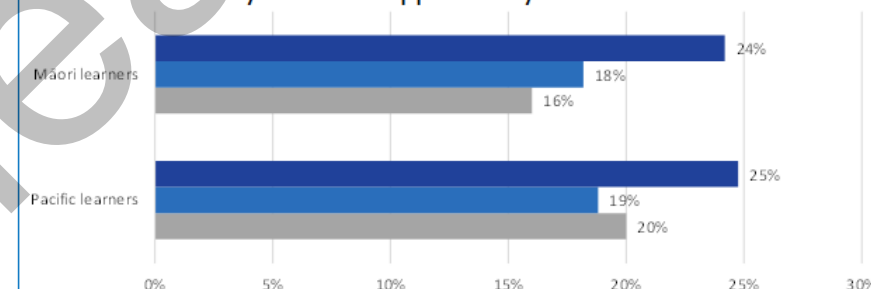
Learners supported

Respondents used the funding to support 19,571 learners in the Auckland region – 18,126 (93%) of whom were supported by schools and kura.

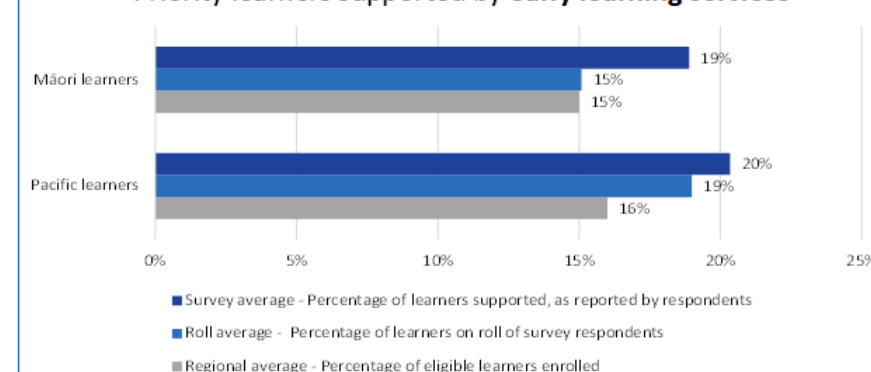
The proportion of priority learners supported, was higher than both the proportion of priority learners on respondents' rolls and the proportion regionally.

Respondents told us that 26% of learners supported had existing learning support needs.

Priority learners supported by schools and kura



Priority learners supported by early learning services

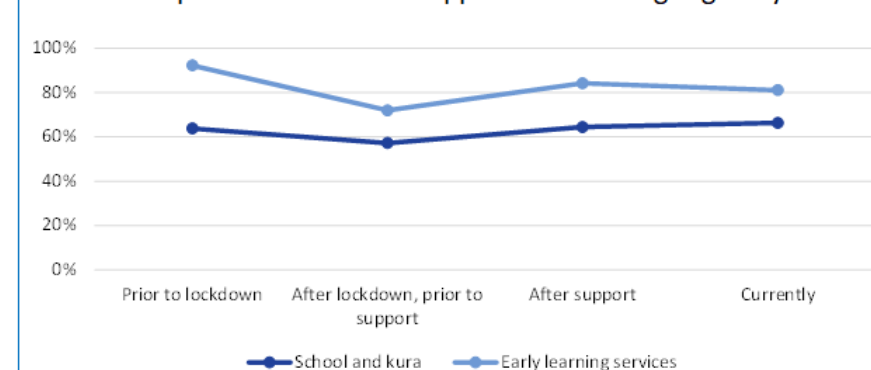


Attendance

Respondents indicated that, on average, learners supported by the URF:

- had lower proportions of 'regular' attendance after lockdown than prior to lockdown.
- the 'regular' attendance of these learners improved after support was provided and for schools and kura, the improvement continued to the time of the survey.

Proportion of learners supported attending regularly



COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND Outcomes Survey – ākonga, whānau and kaiako voice	
Ākonga Learner	Whānau Parents and family
<p><i>“My favourite time is teacher’s being in the quiet corner with me when I feel sad.”</i></p> <p>Ākonga whose Kindergarten used URF funding to employ more teacher aides.</p> <p><i>"It has helped me to understand what I am feeling and how to deal with it. I have strategies to use when I am feeling in the red zone. I have been practicing playing with others with X. I love my time with her.”</i></p> <p>Primary ākonga whose school used URF funding to fund a counsellor to provide play theory and pastoral care.</p> <p><i>“I loved going to boxing on a Thursday. It was cool and I felt better about myself” “It was good to talk about discipline and respect” “I feel more control of my feelings now”</i></p> <p>Year 5/6 ākonga whose school used URF funding to employ boxing academy mentors to support wellbeing.</p> <p><i>“Getting picked up from my house has made my mum be ready for me now to get to school...I'm not getting left behind from my groups in learning cos I'm at school everyday.”</i></p> <p><i>“Without the original support from X I would not have had the best chance to get my credits.”</i></p> <p><i>“It helped me as I was well behind when I returned from lockdown. I felt too far behind but soon realised that I was able to catch up and do a bit extra needed to catch up with the help of X”</i></p> <p>Secondary ākonga whose school used URF funding on tutors to help students catch up academically.</p> <p><i>“Mum mainly wanted me to stay at home and help with the babies. I liked that X helped my mum to make a plan so I can come to school.... I have a plan to only be home when I am sick and Mum talks to X when I am not coming and doesn’t even have to tell the office”.</i></p> <p>Secondary ākonga whose Kāhui Ako used URF funding for additional staffing capacity to provide time for key staff to work with families and students with attendance concerns.</p>	<p><i>“My child has a sense of belonging and is more confident”</i></p> <p>Whānau whose early learning centre used the URF funding to introduce a wellbeing programme.</p> <p><i>“We are very grateful for the support you have given us. Spending time showing us how to use Seesaw to look at our tamariki learning is great - thank you! Finding different ways to engage my child has been beneficial - coming along to watch lessons and different strategies has been really helpful.”</i></p> <p>Whānau whose primary school used the URF funding to fund a relationship teacher to make connections between whānau and school.</p> <p><i>“She’s really come a long way...she’s self-regulating really well now.”</i></p> <p>Whānau whose primary school used URF funding to employ a teacher aide to pilot a wellbeing programme.</p> <p><i>“My daughter has been able to attend better and to engage more in learning through the work of the dedicated teacher aide in learning support”</i></p> <p><i>“Valuable to have speakers or our own language working with our daughters and able to communicate with us.”</i></p> <p>Whānau whose secondary school used URF funding to employ a translator to support refugee ākonga and their families.</p> <p><i>"I am always anxious and nervous about referrals to services and random people coming to my house to try and help and I don't always understand where they come from or why they are here. It was nice working with Matua because he knew all my kids and had taught two of my older ones and he knew I try my hardest and he gave me good ideas but I didn't feel he judges me."</i></p> <p>Whānau whose Kāhui Ako used URF funding for additional staffing capacity to provide time for key staff to work with families and students with attendance concerns.</p>
Kaiako Teachers	Tumuaki Principals and other school staff
<p><i>We can see the difference in behaviour and increased interest in the preschool surroundings. There has been a notable improvement in engagement.”</i></p> <p>Early childhood kaiako whose centre used URF funding to fund a teacher aide for a non-verbal ākonga.</p> <p><i>“It was great to see student A move from not completing a single task to being able to follow his own learning menu with guidance. His ability to work independently is growing. Student A’s attitude towards learning is beginning to change, he is starting to believe that he can learn. Student A was stood down twice for major incidents. There have been no major incidents since support from URF fund began.</i></p> <p>Primary kaiako whose school used URF funding to employ a teacher aide for a ākonga who was finding it hard to complete tasks.</p> <p><i>"We are all very proud of the support we have been able to give our tamariki and being able to provide for children when they needed it the most during those difficult times. We have a lot of struggling families and if we can do something to support them in the slightest, we would.”</i></p> <p>Secondary kaiako whose school used URF funding to set up a sensory room.</p> <p><i>“As our kura attendance officer was generated from within the kura whānau and not the official truancy office, our whānau were more receptive. Our attendance officer visits whānau in their home. He has shown them how to use the kura app to let the kura know when and if their tamariki would not be at kura. The use of the kura app has been improved hugely by whānau. Our attendance officer has his own tamariki attending kura and is also known by our kura whānau so there are no surprises when he contacts and visits whānau to discuss their tamariki attendance.”</i></p> <p>Kaiako whose kura used URF funding to employ an attendance officer.</p>	<p><i>“As an LSC I have noticed less anxiety amongst the students that were supported for anxiety at school”</i></p> <p>Learning Support Coordinator whose primary school used URF funding to fund a wellbeing mentor.</p> <p><i>“My perspective and experience in being a Kāhui Ako social worker is, it has added a depth to my social work and ... has done a fantastic job in galvanizing the other 18 headmasters and schools together in a manner that displays they are committed to assisting their students and schools with what is often difficult and stressful issues to work through.”</i></p> <p>Kāhui ako social worker whose kāhui ako used the URF funding to fund a social worker</p> <p><i>“It was much appreciated and allowed a safe, friendly way for us to ease some of our students back in last year. They needed breaks, and time to talk to an adult.”</i></p> <p>Principal whose school who used the URF funding to create a lego room for ākonga</p> <p><i>“Employing a teacher aide helped us to retain the classroom teacher and to re-establish learning and behavioural expectations. The teacher aide helped diffuse situations and provided time-out supervision for difficult students.”</i></p> <p>Principal whose primary school used the URF funding to fund a teacher aide.</p> <p><i>“As a result of intervention to support year 11 students at risk of not achieving a mother commented on how supported her son felt by the school. His attendance has improved dramatically. As a year 12 student he is now a 'regular attender' at 92.7%. He is more resilient and contributes positively to the culture of the school.”</i></p> <p>Principal whose secondary school used URF funding for mentors and additional teacher aide time.</p>

NOTE: The Outcomes Survey was sent to the principal, tumuaki or early learning equivalent. The examples in this annex were extracted from questions 27-29 of the Survey which asks respondents to provide examples of learner | ākonga, whānau or teacher | kaiako, principal | tumuaki or other staff voice. Respondents indicated that these were the verbal and/or written feedback received about the impact of the URF.

Annex 3: Success and challenges in improving attendance using the URF (Vignettes)

The following vignettes provide examples of the success and challenges that some schools, kura and early learning service me ngā kōhanga reo have experienced when using the Urgent Response Fund (URF). They were gathered from the responses received through the survey with Ministry regional staff input.

Success: Kāhui Ako

A Waikato Kāhui Ako comprising early learning services, primary and secondary schools was seeing a trend of learners struggling with engagement, behaviour and low attendance in the schools in their community. Whānau were under pressure and the added stress of COVID-19 exacerbated the impact of external pressures. Some whānau were at breaking point. Whānau were also very anxious about the long-term effects of COVID-19. Numerous whānau had approached schools in the Kāhui Ako, unable to cope and unsure of where to go for help.

The Kāhui Ako wanted to respond to the mental health and wellbeing needs of their community and give them tools to help them cope. They used the URF to fund counsellors to work in schools in their community. The counsellors worked with both the ākonga and their whānau to tailor their counselling to their specific needs and provide them with resources and tools that they could use at both home and school.

The Kāhui Ako told us that they strongly agreed that learners supported by the URF had decreased anxiety and stress levels, improved emotional regulation, fewer episodes of escalated or challenging behaviour and were more settled.

They also told us that learners were gaining valuable skills and that parents had been given strategies to help their children to engage in their learning again. They said that, as a result of the URF support, parents reported feeling more positive looking ahead and could let go of some of their worries. Examples of learner voice shared by the Kāhui Ako:

"I liked talking with them [the counsellors]. They helped me to understand how to keep calm."

"I'm glad I went. They got me."

Success: Early learning service

Kaiako at an early learning service in the Gisborne area were finding it hard to meet the extra behavioural needs that arose after coming back from lockdown. They had several tamariki with moderate to high needs that were having trouble with regulating their behaviour, speech issues, toileting, concentration and engaging in learning.

The early learning service wanted to respond to the needs of these tamariki by re-engaging them, helping them with their specific individual needs and supporting them with regulating their behaviour. They used the URF support to fund an extra kaiako to give the individual tamariki the 1:1 time and guidance they needed.

The early learning service reported that having an extra kaiako had been a success and was evident in the behaviour, learning and development progress they were seeing in the tamariki they had targeted. They also reported that the relationships that the tamariki formed with the extra kaiako had empowered them to move to a higher level of learning and had supported their wellbeing.

An example of whānau voice shared by the early learning service:

"My child is now wanting to learn and is far more settled since having [the kaiako] working with him."

Challenges: Secondary school

An Auckland secondary school with a high Pacific population was seeing a number of students overwhelmed by their workload and family commitments. Ākonga, whose families had lost their jobs due to COVID-19, picked up jobs as essential workers during lockdown and continued to work after lockdown to support their families. Others didn't have access to devices. Kaiako noticed a lack of engagement online during multiple lockdowns which resulted in ākonga getting behind in their work and at risk of not completing their NCEA levels. A number of ākonga reported feeling left behind which led to increased absenteeism.

The school wanted to respond to the needs of its learners by re-engaging its students and helping them catch up with the work they had missed. They used the URF fund to employ mentors, mainly Pacific tertiary students from the local university and institute for technology, for pastoral and academic support, along with teacher aides and release teachers. This initiative allowed mentors to create relationships with at-risk students and work alongside them. Released teachers also worked in blocks with groups of students to support them in specific academic areas.

At the time of the survey, the school told us that attendance and re-engagement were still issues for some because ākonga continued to help at home or have part-time jobs that kept them away from school. With this group they found it hard to re-engage the students that were regularly absent.

While the school has faced challenges re-engaging some students the Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning gave positive feedback on the work of the mentors:

“The mentoring programme has helped build student confidence, motivating them to complete work and it has helped them focus on tasks. The mentors have encouraged students to stay on track. I have seen an improvement in the student achievement because their engagement has increased.”

Success: Intermediate school

An intermediate school in Nelson was seeing an increase in the number of ākonga with low attendance after the first COVID-19 lockdown. They were getting reports from parents and whānau that their tamariki were anxious and were worried about COVID-19. They reported that a number of parents had rung the school to ask if someone could pick up their children and bring them to school or to talk to their child on the phone to reassure them it was safe to come to school.

The school wanted to respond to the needs of these whānau and provide them with support to get to school and to help with the anxiety both whānau and tamariki were experiencing. The school used the URF support to fund an experienced youth worker to support ākonga. The youth worker provided a pick-up service from the homes of the ākonga, support for the whānau in establishing and maintaining routines and boundaries and ensured that identified ākonga were able to access other basic needs around their wellbeing at school.

After coming back to school from the first lockdown there were 23 ākonga who had attendance levels below 80%. At the time of the survey the school told us that the majority of the ākonga with low attendance now attend school regularly. They also told us that whānau were appreciative of the support they received from the youth worker who was going ‘above and beyond’ what had been asked of them.