



Briefing Note: Reprioritising distance learning pack funding talking points

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
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Drafter:	Samantha Young	DDI:	04 463 2816
Key Contact:	Joshua Thurston	DDI:	04 463 8894
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Purpose of Report

The briefing provides you with key talking points for reprioritising distance learning pack funding for all state and state integrated schools and kura at the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on 2 March [METIS 1281720 refers].

Proactive Release

- a **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing once it has been considered by you, with any information that may need to be withheld done so in line with the provisions of the Official information Act 1982.

Release / Not release

John Brooker
Group Manager
Te Puna Kaupapahere | Policy

20/02/2022



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

2/3/22

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Background

- 1 On 28 January 2022 the Ministry proposed providing resourcing to schools and kura to support their preparation for distance and blended learning [METIS 1280781 refers]. You directed the Ministry to ensure regional insights would be considered in any allocation method. At your Agency meeting with officials on 14 February 2022, you agreed to take the proposal to Cabinet to re-allocate the funding to a non-departmental fund.

Key Talking Points

Proposal to reprioritise distance learning pack funds

- 2 In August 2021, Cabinet agreed to provide \$22 million to support distance education by providing learning packs through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) as part of the response to the August COVID-19 outbreak.
- 3 This package of centrally-managed support has previously served schools and kura well and it is now time to shift our support closer to schools so they are better equipped to respond to the needs of their students.
- 4 Schools and kura will largely remain open where possible under the COVID-19 Protection Framework, and they will need to be flexible and resilient in their provision of distance and hybrid learning. We are already seeing schools manage this well.
- 5 But, we know that not all schools and kura have the same level of preparedness, and that there is not equal access to digital technology or quality learning materials. Government support for these learners is crucial to supporting all learners to continue accessing education despite the disruption caused by COVID-19.

This proposal requires no new funding, but is about shifting the locus of support from the Ministry to schools and kura

- 6 I believe that the most useful response from the Ministry in this new context is to support flexible and local provision of blended and distance learning is to enable our regions to make funding allocations to schools and kura where need is identified. Our teachers and kaiako in schools and kura are best placed to determine and respond to their own distance learning needs.
- 7 I propose that \$11 million be reprioritised from the distance learning pack fund, and allocated directly to schools and kura to provide them with flexible support which can be used to best prepare for distance and hybrid learning in their respective contexts.
- 8 As with the majority of flexible operational funding provided to schools and kura, there is a risk that these funds are used for purposes unrelated to supporting distance and hybrid learning. However, I consider these risks acceptable in comparison to the benefits of ensuring students can remain engaged in their learning. This is a high-trust approach, and I am confident the sector is focused on supporting learners at this time.
- 9 The per-school amount of funding can be flexibly used by schools and kura to improve their distance and hybrid learning preparedness. This might include activities such as:
 - a. Preparing hard-copy curriculum resources;
 - b. Delivering materials to learner households; or

- c. Providing access to digital teaching and learning platforms.

This funding will support our broader commitment to enabling distance and hybrid learning

- 10 The Ministry already has a range of supports in place to enable distance and hybrid learning in schools. This includes:
 - a. Online resources for teachers, whānau, and learners;
 - b. Professional learning and development in digital fluency; and
 - c. Continued provision of subsidised internet connections and on-demand educational television programming.
- 11 This package of support means schools and kura have multiple options to continue engaging their learners through COVID-19-related disruptions.

How funding will be allocated to schools and kura

- 12 Ministry officials have developed a model for allocating this funding to schools and kura. The allocation method is a combination of a formula-driven approach, including weightings for socioeconomic disadvantage and isolation, and a regional discretionary fund.
- 13 This enables the Ministry to provide additional support for individual schools as need is identified. This is a similar approach to other funding provided to schools as part of the COVID-19 response, including the Urgent Response Fund.
- 14 While the Ministry is still finalising the funding approach, I am mindful of the need to ensure our smallest and most isolated schools receive sufficient funding to address their particular challenges. I am advised that there will be a minimum amount of funding provided, likely to be between \$750 – \$1,000. Larger schools will receive a capped amount, likely around \$10,000, to ensure the funding can be spread as far as possible.
- 15 Ministry regional offices may then identify additional need that has not been captured in the model and have the discretion to give additional funding to particular schools.