

Briefing Note: June update on the Urgent Response Fund (COVID-19)

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	23 June 2021	Priority:	Medium
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose

This briefing updates you on the Urgent Response Fund (URF), including analysis of the distribution of funding to date.

You noted on the May URF Update [METIS 1258707] that you would like the June update to focus more on outcomes including how attendance, wellbeing and engagement have improved as a result of the URF. Activities to understand and report on the impact of the URF are described in paragraphs 7-9 and 21-22.

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released.

Agree / Disagree



Susan Howan
Acting Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement & Support

23/6/21

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

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Summary

1. Over \$48.3 million of URF funding has been distributed at 26 May 2021. Directors of Education are on track to distribute their regional URF allocations by 30 June 2021.
2. We will survey recipients of URF funding in Term 3 to understand how the URF has contributed to outcomes for attendance, wellbeing and engagement.
3. It is not possible to draw robust conclusions around the impact of the URF for the cohort that received funding in 2020 using national attendance data up to Term 4 2020. We will provide an overview of attendance data up to Term 1 2021 and the URF, including any insights on URF outcomes, in the next Briefing Note.

Background

4. The Urgent Response Fund (URF) provides \$50 million in 2020/21 to support children and young people's attendance, re-engagement in learning and wellbeing after the COVID-19 lockdowns.
5. We have used the Equity Index (EQI) to allocate the URF funding to regions¹. The regional Directors of Education approve applications, working with regional advisory groups, to ensure that local knowledge and priorities inform funding decisions.
6. This update follows previous monthly reports since September 2020² and regular updates in the Education Weekly Update (EWU).

Understanding the impact of the URF

7. At the time of writing, online applications for the fund had closed for all regions. We are working with Directors of Education to ensure final URF payments are made and decisions recorded.
8. After 30 June, we will undertake activities to understand and report on the impact of the URF, including outcomes related to attendance, re-engagement in learning and wellbeing. The two main activities are as follows:
 - a. Analysis on the distribution of the whole of the URF. This will incorporate examples of good practice, any findings from attendance data (up to Term 1 2021), as well as insights from regional advisory groups. We will share our findings with you through dashboards in a Briefing Note in early August.
 - b. A survey for all schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that received URF funding to understand how the URF has contributed to outcomes for attendance, wellbeing and engagement. This survey will be carried out in Term 3 and will build on the URF Interim Outcomes Survey, undertaken in November and December 2020. Additional areas of enquiry and a more tailored approach for ākonga Māori will be incorporated. Reporting is expected in October.
9. Further comment on the analysis of attendance data is in paragraphs 18 and 19.

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, 1245690, 1249648, 1251861, and 1255294, 1258707 refer. No report was provided in January 2021.

10. To ensure information of public interest is made available as soon as possible, we will also prepare updated information on education institutions that received URF funding, to be published on the Ministry website. This update will provide a complete view of URF funding. As with the previous release, education institutions will be consulted. For this reason, we intend to publish the information in late October.

Distribution of URF funding to 26 May 2021

Key URF metrics to 26 May 2021

11. Annex 1 provides a national summary of the distribution of URF funding to 26 May 2021. To date, Directors of Education have approved 5,036 applications to the URF totalling \$48.3 million³. The total number of applications submitted as at 26 May was 7,292.
12. In the four weeks post 28 April 2021, we have approved 485 applications valued at \$4.3 million. Together these 485 applications support 27,733 ākonga. In the previous period, 407 applications valued at \$3.8 million were approved.
13. As a result of the applications through May, three regions (Auckland; Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast; and Otago, Southland) have fully distributed their funds. A further three are within 3%.
14. At 26 May 2021, 13% of the funding allocated has been allocated to early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo. This has increased by 1% from the proportion reported at 28 April 2021.
15. Average funding per learner has increased, from \$93 to \$95 per learner for learners at schools and kura and from \$116 to \$133 for learners at early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo.
16. The increase in the average spend for learners at early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo can be attributed to 46 separate applications for ngā Kōhanga Reo approved in two different regions – with a combined value of \$902,689 to support 1,991 learners.
 - a. In the Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatū region, regional office staff had active conversations with the sector that resulted in separate applications approved for 45 different Kōhanga Reo across the region – with a total combined value of \$415,017 to support 961 learners.
 - b. In the Auckland region, regional office staff worked with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust to support a cluster application valued at \$487,672 for 1,030 learners⁴.
17. These applications have also raised the proportion of Māori learners at early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with approved URF applications to shift from 25% in the previous period, to 28% at 26 May.
18. As we near the end of the fund, we have continued to see a reduction in the number of new URF applications being submitted. Schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo submitted 303 new URF applications since 26 April, compared with

³ Applications made before the online process (4 August 2020) are not included in these figures. These account for \$212,478. This is slightly higher than previously reported figures due to an identified coding error. No monitoring data is available for this funding.

⁴ This application was led by Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust and so is not reflected in analysis of URF-funded early learning services' EQI ratings or enrolment data.

440 in the previous period, with the rate of new applications being received declining over the period.

19. The total number of applications remaining under consideration has reduced from 352 at 28 April to 94 at 26 May. At 26 May, 69% of the 7,292 applications submitted had been approved.

Schools and kura in receipt of URF funding

20. Each month, we analyse the profile of the schools and kura with approved URF applications. This is shown in Annex 1. This analysis has been used through the implementation of the fund to support local decision making and identify opportunities for directing the URF to areas of greatest need.
21. We have also analysed Terms 3 and 4 attendance data with URF data for schools and kura. It is not possible to draw robust conclusions around the impact of the URF for the cohort that received funding in 2020 using national attendance data for the following reasons:
 - a. Attendance typically declines between Term 3 and Term 4 meaning we would not expect to see a positive impact using data across these two terms.
 - b. Comparing 2020 to 2019 data does not take account of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on attendance in 2020 at the schools and kura receiving funding.
 - c. URF funding was targeted at schools and kura with attendance challenges, therefore it is not meaningful to compare those with URF funding to those without. Schools and kura without URF are not an appropriate control group.
22. At the time of writing, Term 1 2021 attendance data was not available, but is expected shortly. We will provide an overview of this data and the URF, including any insights on URF outcomes, in the August Briefing Note.
23. Overall, low decile schools and kura, and their ākonga, are well represented in the proportion of URF funding received.
24. The proportion of eligible decile 1 schools which have not received URF funding is higher than the proportion across all eligible schools (28% compared with 25%). Regional staff have engaged with low decile schools and kura to ensure that, where need exists, they are supported to make an application. Decile 1 schools which have not accessed funding may have accessed URF support through a cluster application; or are specialist schools or Teen Parent Units and have accessed other funding, such as the At Risk COVID-19 fund.
25. At 26 May, the percentage of Māori learners in schools and kura with approved URF applications remains the same as the percentage of Māori learners in all eligible schools and kura (24%). We will be undertaking further work to understand the impact of the URF on Māori learners, including as part of follow-up with funded institutions.
26. The percentage of Pacific learners in schools and kura with approved URF applications continues to be slightly higher than the percentage of Pacific learners in all eligible schools and kura.
27. Low decile schools and kura, and those with high proportions of Māori learners, remain priority areas for the final allocation decisions.

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

28. In Annex 1 we have included an analysis of the profile of early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with approved URF applications.
29. Nationally, the percentage of both Māori and Pacific learners in early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that have approved URF applications continue to be higher than the percentage of Māori and Pacific learners in all eligible early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo. The percentage of Māori learners in early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that have approved URF applications has increased as a result of the 45 applications approved for Kōhanga Reo in the Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatu region.
30. 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 an EQI rating of 5+⁵. To date, 58% of the funding to the early learning sector has gone to organisations with an EQI rating of 1 - 4, up from 55% at 28 April. Only 31% of learners are enrolled in services with an EQI rating of 1 - 4.
31. 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 a priority through the allocation of the remainder of the URF.

Next steps

32. We will continue to update you weekly in the EWU on key metrics for the URF until the end of the fund.
33. The next URF Briefing Note will include additional analysis undertaken on the full URF dataset as well as insights from regional advisory groups. We therefore expect to provide it in early August.

Proactive Release

34. 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 26 May 2021)

⁵ The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Service EQI measure 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.

COVID-19 URGENT RESPONSE FUND – National summary of URF allocation (4 August 2020 to 26 May 2021)

We have approved 5,036 applications to the URF totalling \$48.3m. These applications support 489,205 learners, more than 195,000 of whom are in Auckland.

Early learning services me ngā kohanga reo

- 48,444 learners supported across 856 services
- 952 approved applications, valued at \$6.4m
- Average funding of \$133 per learner

Schools and kura

- 440,761 learners supported across 1,835 schools and kura
- 4,084 approved applications valued at \$41.9m
- Average funding of \$95 per learner

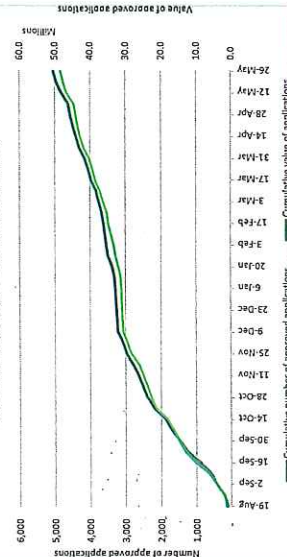
At 26 May, 69% of the 7,292 submitted applications have been approved.

Pipeline of URF applications



Both the number and total value of approved applications are steadily increasing.

URF weekly approvals (cumulative)

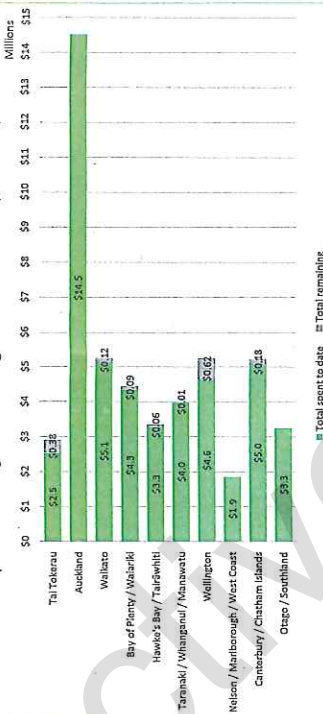


Of the 795 eligible decile 1-3 schools and kura across New Zealand, 24% (190) have not received URF funding. This is 25 fewer than at 28 April. Note: A small number of schools with URF funding do not have decile information and are therefore not included in the chart.

	Decile									
	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
Eligible schools and kura without URF funding	84	59	47	41	71	48	72	67	67	616
Percentage of eligible schools and kura without URF funding	28%	23%	19%	17%	29%	21%	30%	29%	29%	25%

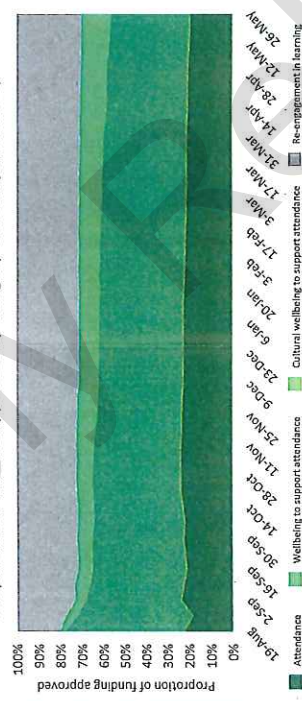
Nationally, 97% of the URF has been allocated. Three regions have completely allocated their funding. Note: These figures include \$212,478 allocated 1 July to 4 August 2020. No monitoring data is available for this funding.

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



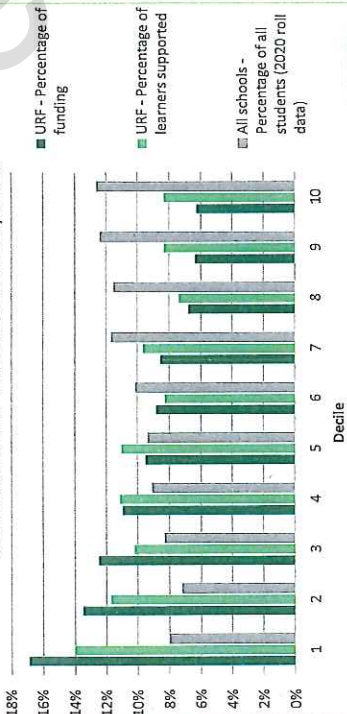
Support for needs related to wellbeing to support attendance continues to make up the largest proportion of the value of approved URF applications.

Proportion of amount approved by category of need (cumulative)



Nationally, 43% 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.

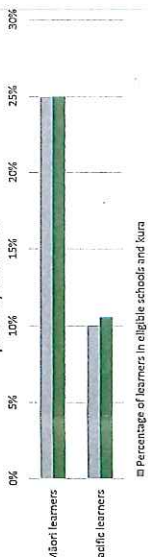
Distribution of URF in schools and kura by decile



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

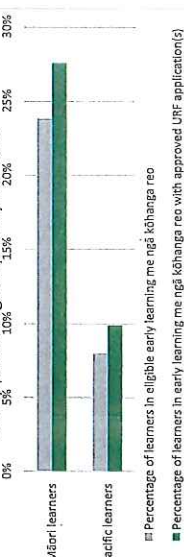
The percentage of Māori learners in schools and kura with URF funding is approximately equal to the percentage of Māori learners in all eligible schools.

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



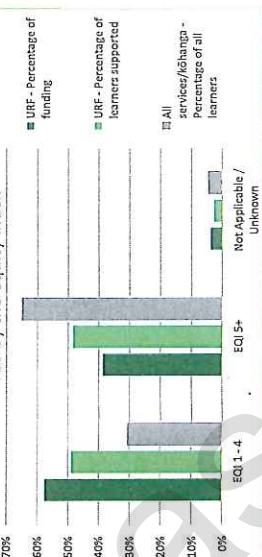
The percentage of Māori and Pacific learners in early learning services me ngā kohanga reo with URF funding is higher than the percentage in all eligible services.

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



Nationally, 58% of the URF funding approved for early learning services me ngā kohanga 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 kohanga reo by the equity index



Notes: Numbers of learners are based on data provided in each application. Some education institutions have made multiple applications and that where this occurs, the same learners may be supported. Cluster applications are attributed to the main applicant. Applications made before the online process (4 August 2020) are not included unless stated. These account for \$205,191. No monitoring data is available for this funding. 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 ECI (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.