MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

Briefing Note: March 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:	12 March 2021	**Priority:**	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	**METIS No:**	1251861
Drafter:	Laura Stokes	**DDI:**	s 9(2)(a)
Key Contact:	Susan Howan	**DDI:**	s 9(2)(a)
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	**Round Robin:**	No

Purpose of paper

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

- Analysis of the distribution of funding to date
- An update on the remainder of the fund for regions to allocate.

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. Over $35 million of URF funding has been distributed to date.

Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement & Support
12, 3, 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education
25/3/21
__/__/____

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 regions[1]. The regional Directors of Education approve applications, working with regional advisory groups, to ensure that local knowledge and priorities inform funding decisions.

3. This update follows previous monthly reports since September 2020[2] and fortnightly updates in the Education Weekly Update (EWU).

Allocation of URF funding to 24 February 2021

Key URF metrics to 24 February 2021

4. Annex 1 provides a national summary of the allocation of URF funding to 24 February 2021. We have approved 3,665 applications to the URF totalling $35.2 million.

5. Since 28 January 2021, we have approved 175 applications valued at $2.5 million. Together these 175 applications support 13,214 ākonga. In the previous period[3], 518 applications valued at $4.3 million were approved.

6. As at 24 February 2021, 13% of the funding allocated has been allocated to early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo. This has not changed from the proportion reported at 27 January 2021.

7. A high proportion of Auckland schools and kura have been allocated URF funding. The Auckland region has allocated 66% of its funds, with 77% of eligible schools and kura[4] having received URF funding compared with 67% nationally.

8. Schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo submitted 310 new URF applications since 28 January, compared with 511 in the previous period. Since the start of Term 1 2021, the number of new URF applications submitted has risen each week but remains lower than in 2020. The total number of applications submitted at 24 February 2021 was 5,725.

9. Of the 5,725 applications submitted, 64% have been approved (no change in approval percentage from 27 January 2021). Regional advisory groups and Ministry regional staff continue to work together to identify need, particularly for priority learners, and support the sector to submit well considered applications which meet the scope of the fund[5]. Feedback from regions is that recent applications continue to be well considered and in general are more targeted than those submitted at the start of the fund.

---

[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 and 1249648 refers. No report was provided in January 2021.
[3] The previous period is 26 November 2020 to 27 January 2021 [METIS 1249648 refers].
[4] Eligible schools and kura includes state schools, state integrated schools, ngā kura Kaupapa Māori, ngā Kura a Iwi, specialist schools.
[5] Where an application is out of scope, or needs an amendment, regional staff work closely with the applicant to help them refocus their application and resubmit if needed.

Schools and kura in receipt of URF funding

10.   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.

11.   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 39% of decile 1 schools.

12.   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.

13.   As regional decisions are made on the allocation of the remainder of the fund, responding to needs related to attendance, re-engagement with learning and wellbeing in low decile schools and kura, and those with high proportions of Māori learners, remain the priority.

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

14.   In Annex 1 we have included an analysis of the profile of early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with approved URF applications.

15.   Nationally, the percentage of both Māori and Pacific learners in early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that have approved URF applications are higher than the percentage of Māori and Pacific learners in all eligible early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo.

16.   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+[6]. To date, 53% 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.

17.   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.

Allocating the remainder of the URF

18.   Each region will have unique local needs. Approaches and decisions on the allocation of the remainder of the fund by the Directors of Education and regional advisory groups will differ based on the proportion of unallocated funds remaining in each region, which varies from 11% to 39%.

---

[6] 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.

19.   We are currently not seeing a high volume of new URF applications being submitted by schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo. While both the number of new applications submitted and the value of applications approved are increasing as Term 1 2021 progresses, neither the volume of applications nor the value of applications have increased to peak levels in 2020.

20.   Directors of Education are working with their regional advisory groups to plan for the allocation of the balance of the fund. We will provide you with an update on how they intend to manage this in the next monthly update.

Next steps

21.   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.

22.   We are also working with your office to proactively release URF data for applications funded in 2020 in late March or early April 2021.

Proactive Release

23.   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 24 February 2021)

We have approved 3,665 applications to the URF totalling $35.2m. URF allocations have supported or are supporting 388,498 learners, more than 162,600 of whom are in Auckland.

Early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo
- 40,605 learners supported across 717 services*
- 761 approved applications, valued at $4.6m
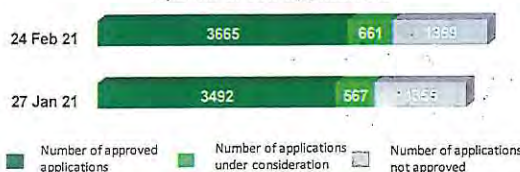- Average funding of $113 per learner

Schools and kura
- 347,893 learners supported across 1,634 schools and kura*
- 2,904 approved applications valued at $30.6m
- Average funding of $88 per learner

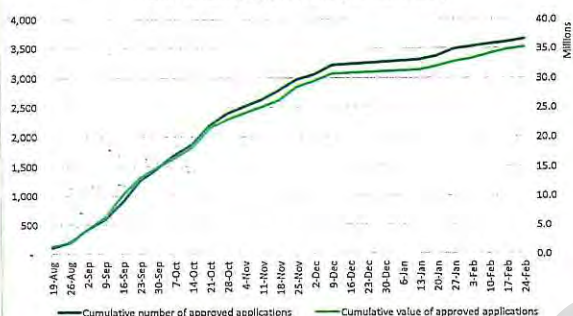*Cluster applications are attributed to the main applicant.

At 24 February, 64% of the 5,725 submitted applications have been approved.

Pipeline of URF applications

Both the number and total value of approved applications plateaued during the summer break but is starting to increase as Term 1 2021 progresses.

URF weekly approvals (cumulative)

Of the 795 eligible decile 1-3 schools and kura across New Zealand, 34% (269) have not received URF funding. This is 8 fewer than at 27 January. Note: A small number of schools with URF funding do not have decile information and are therefore not included in the chart.
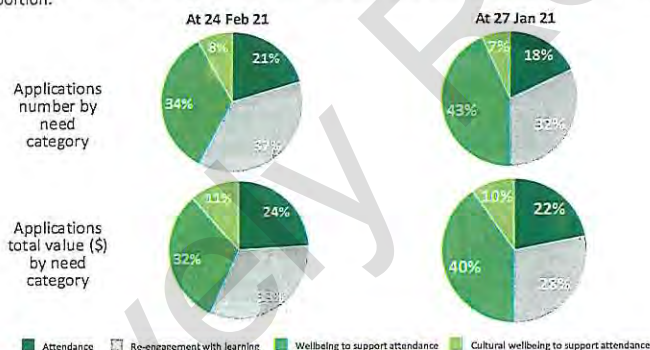
New Zealand	Decile 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Total eligible schools and kura in region	297	255	243	238	245	226	244	233	229	234	2,444
Eligible schools and kura without URF funding	117	84	68	59	89	69	89	81	79	79	814
Percentage of eligible schools and kura without	39%	33%	28%	25%	36%	31%	36%	35%	34%	34%	33%

Nationally, 71% of the URF has been allocated. The proportion of unallocated funds remaining in each region varies from 11% to 39%.

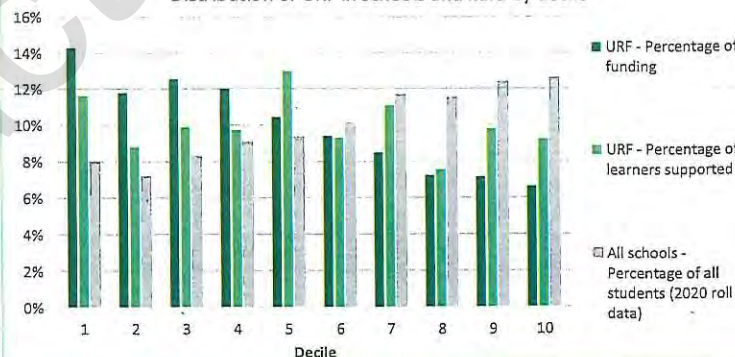#### Proportion of regional funding allocated to date ($ Million)

At 24 February, needs related to re-engagement with learning make up the largest proportion of both the number and value of applications. Attendance and cultural wellbeing have also increased as a proportion.

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.
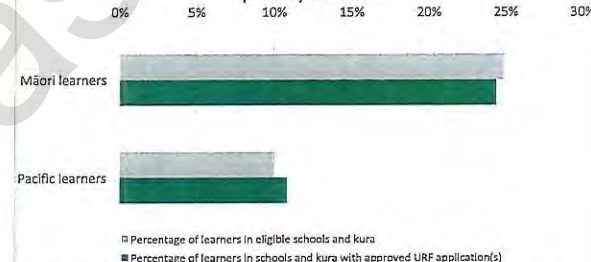
Distribution of URF in schools and kura by decile

Analysis of the profile of schools, kura, early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo with approved URF applications supports local decision making and engagement.
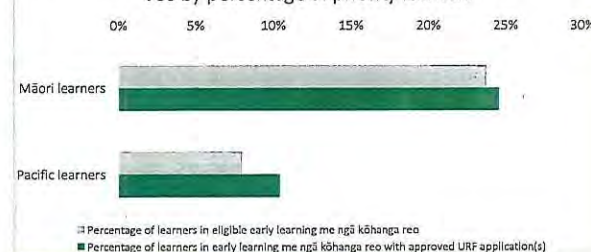
The percentage of Māori learners in schools and kura with URF funding is slightly lower than the percentage of all eligible schools. The percentage of Pacific learners in schools and kura with URF funding is higher than the percentage in all eligible schools and kura.

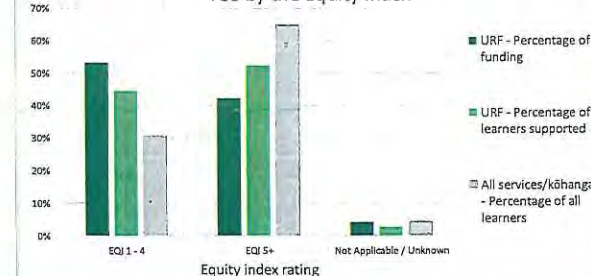#### Distribution of URF in schools and kura by percentage of priority learners

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, 53% 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.