

Unmet Basic Needs Fund Guidance for Attendance Service Providers

Purpose of the Fund

This guidance is for Attendance Service Providers. The Unmet Basic Needs Fund is designed to address unmet basic needs of referred (chronically absent or non-enrolled) ākonga (students), where these unmet needs are immediate, impacting on attendance, and cannot be met from any other source. It may also be used to meet needs temporarily, while a longer-term solution from a more appropriate fund, agency or organisation is arranged.

Unmet basic needs may include, but are not limited to, things such as uniforms or other clothing items, stationery or transport.

Attendance service providers may use up to three percent (3%) of their Attendance Service contract funding to meet these needs. If more than 3% is required, providers must contact the Ministry to discuss and agree on next steps.

How to get started

These are the things you need to put in place to set up and make use of the Fund.

- **Establish your fund:** Set up and manage an Unmet Basic Needs Fund using up to 3% of budget. This includes creating policies and procedures for fund management and administration.
- **Policies and procedures:** Policies and procedures must be clear and comprehensive, covering all aspects of fund request management and administration, including expenditure management and approvals, reconciliation and reporting.
- **Agreed use:** The Fund must be used in accordance with the purpose of the Fund as outlined above.
- **Not in scope for Fund usage:** The Fund must not be used for items that are not linked to attendance, for ongoing costs, gifts or rewards or incentives, items covered by other funding (that can also be accessed in a timely manner), luxury or non-essential items, or retrospective claims without receipts or documentation (except as detailed in your agreed procedures).
- **Reporting:** Fund usage must be reported as part of your existing regular provider reports.

Record keeping

You must keep detailed records of each spend. Note the ākonga case number from the Ministry's Attendance Service case management system (AS-CMS) when you record the spend

in your accounting system, so the records can be linked. Remember to protect privacy — do not record ākonga names or personal details in your finance or accounting systems.

Records must also include who proposed the spend, who approved it (this must be a different person), the amount and date, an itemised receipt, and notes on any changes from the original request. These records must be available to the Ministry on request.

Spend must also be recorded against the ākonga case in the AS-CMS. This includes the amount spent, the category, the items, and a description. The AS-CMS Guidance explains how to do this using the 'Add UBNF' function.

Good practice

The following are a mix of good practice and ideas. Consider these points when defining your policy and procedures.

- **Approvals:** Requests must be reviewed and approved by separate individuals, with the approver in a leadership role. Exceptions to this process must be agreed and documented within your own policy and procedures. For example, use of a petty cash or petty spend system, or auto-approval of spend below a specified threshold or for specified purposes.
- **Analysis:** Include regular internal reviews to identify patterns, ensure equitable access, and confirm compliance with your procedures.
- **Reporting:** Include in reports- total spent, percentage of budget used, number of ākonga supported, spend categories and trends, compliance metrics, and strategic insights.
- **Petty spend:** Consider a petty spending policy for small, urgent purchases with simplified documentation and oversight. Ensure receipts are kept for all purchases.
- **Train staff** (and regularly refresh them) on your procedures and use checklists to support consistent decisions.
- **Actively monitor** to look for any disparities in approvals and declines.

Additional points

The following may be included as part of your overall service delivery plan, or in your policy and procedures.

- **Wise use:** To help stretch the Fund further, consider ways to partner with schools, suppliers, and community organisations to access second-hand or discounted items, or to negotiate better pricing.
- **Set clear guides:** Consider if it is appropriate for you to set per- ākonga or term-based caps to manage the Fund responsibly and sustainably.
- **Invite feedback:** Create simple ways for staff to provide feedback on the application process, declined requests, and suggestions for improvement.
- **Act on insights:** Include insights in reports to the Ministry, such as requests that do not fit current rules, common challenges or gaps, and ideas for improving the Fund. Use insights to improve your own in-house procedures and ways of doing things.
- **Bias and cultural competency:** Consider training on unconscious bias and cultural competency.

