

# Briefing report

## Education Review Office (ERO): In-Principle Expense Transfer for Vote Education Review Office across financial years due to the impact of Covid-19

Date	22 May 2020
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M20-18
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
<b>Minister of Education</b>	<p>It is recommended that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>sign</b> both copies of the attached submission to the Minister of Finance.</li> <li>b) <b>agree</b> to forward the signed copies of the attached submission to the Minister of Finance's office by no later than Wednesday, 3 June 2020.</li> </ul>	



### Attachments:

***Education Review Office (ERO):  
In-Principle Expense Transfer  
submission for Vote Education  
Review Office across financial  
years due to the impact of Covid-19***



### Comments:

Minister's Office to complete	
Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	

Our Ref: M20-18

22 May 2020

**Hon Chris Hipkins**  
**Minister of Education**

**In-Principle Expense Transfer for Vote Education Review Office across financial years due to the impact of Covid-19**

**Purpose**

1. ERO will not meet its 2019/20 evaluation numbers of national and local education programmes as schools and early childhood learning centres were locked down and the time it will take for some form of normality to return during this COVID-19 period. As a result, I am proposing, with your agreement, to transfer in-principle part of ERO's 2019/20 surplus to be used to complete existing programmes in 2020/21.
2. ERO has discussed this proposal with the Treasury which they support.

**Background**

3. The Period of COVID lock-down has substantially disrupted ERO's programme of work to review early learning services and schools. This period is typically a peak period for ERO activity.
4. We do not believe that it is fruitful for ERO to rapidly return to its regular review cycle. It is unlikely that we will be welcomed and schools' services will not have attended to many of the activities that ERO focusses on in a typical review (e.g. strategic planning, student assessment insights, staff development etc.). There is also a set of emerging areas for critical attention such as whether centres will survive, attendance and participation and how providers are working with learners to address the impacts of an extended period of absence on learners' progress, and whether there might be emerging risks to child wellbeing and safety.
5. In place of our regular review programme as an interim focus, ERO will work with schools and early learning services to support the reestablishment of service and school-based teaching and learning and to more broadly capture insights into the experiences of the sector. These activities will contribute to the regular cycle reviews when they recommence.

6. In addition, ERO will maintain its focus and support for schools that were struggling prior to the lockdown and who we were working with intensively. Typically, these schools have large numbers of children from low socio-economic background and include many Maori and Pacific learners. Our focus on equity and excellence for all students will continue.
7. ERO is also working to align its operations to the Government decisions in response to the Independent Review of Tomorrow's Schools. This work includes the development of an enhanced methodology with a focus on continuous improvement.
8. ERO's existing national evaluation programmes have also been impacted by the COVID-19 disruptions from not having review officers able to collect overview information and to observe practices by institutions. A critical focus for the sector over coming months will be to ensure that the disruptions to learning from the past two months do not disadvantage long term learner outcomes. Effectively monitoring these and other emerging issues will be critical to ensure that we get in front of any potential risks.

### **In Principle Expense Transfer**

9. The discontinuation of our work with individual early learning services and schools and those field work elements of our national evaluation programme has resulted in ERO not incurring a range of associated operating expenditure, particularly in respect of travel and accommodation, and vacancies resulting from the uncertainty surrounding Tomorrow's Schools. Consequently, ERO is forecasting an operating surplus of approximately \$1.3m at year end.
10. We propose that a proportion of these funds (\$1m) be carried into the coming financial year (2020/21). This transfer of funding will enable ERO to work with schools and early learning services to build the evidence base around the factors at a system level describe above and to support schools and services in identifying strategies which ameliorate any potential negative long-term outcomes.
11. We have discussed this transfer with Treasury who support it and see no issues with this occurring.
12. This in-principle expense transfer requires joint ministers' approval which is yourself as Minister for Vote: ERO and the Minister of Finance, no latter than Wednesday 3 June 2020.

### **Recommendations**

13. It is recommended that you:
  - a) **sign** both copies of the attached submission to the Minister of **sign** Finance.

- b) **agree** to forward the signed copies of the attached submission to the Minister of Finance's office by no later than Wednesday, 3 June 2020. **agree/disagree**



Nicholas Pole  
**Chief Executive**

NOTED/APPROVED



Chris Hipkins  
**Minister of Education**

4 / 6 / 2020