



MEMORANDUM

APPROVAL TO SPEND APPROPRIATION ON PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

To Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response

Date	17/05/2022	Priority	High
Deadline	18/05/2022	Briefing Number	DPMC-2021/22-2155

Purpose

This paper seeks your approval as the Minister for COVID-19 Response to authorise the Chief Executive of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) to incur publicity expenses up to \$12 million related to the COVID-19 Group's evolving public information and engagement campaign.

Recommendations

1. **Note** that when the COVID-19 Group was established in December 2020, it was identified that dedicated funding would be required for the sustainable delivery of public communications and engagement. Cabinet as part of [CAB-20-Min-0487] approved funding of \$21 million for public communications and engagement for the 2022/23.
2. **Note** that Ministerial approval is required for the Chief Executive to incur publicity expenses exceeding \$150,000 (CO (18)2).
3. **Note** that the tender for the communications campaign section of this funding (UAC design, advertising, media) needs to go to market this week
4. **Note** the indicative cost of these publicity expenses is up to \$12million and that the proposed tender will be for an initial term of 6 months with two rights of renewal of 3 months each (at DPMC's sole discretion).


- 5. **Note** that DPMC will seek your approval for part of the remaining \$9 million of the \$21 million funding in the next few weeks. It will include funding for research, translation, printing, website maintenance, targeted communications as well as staff costs. This will include consideration of different scenarios as we transition to a more sustainable approach to managing COVID-19.
- 6. **Approve** the Chief Executive incurring publicity expenses for the COVID-19 public information and engagement campaign of up to \$12million for 2022/23 financial year.

YES / NO



Ruth Fairhall
Head of Strategy and Policy
 COVID-19 Group

17/ 05/ 2022



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID Response-19

18./5./2022

Contact for telephone discussion if required:

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Ruth Fairhall	Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Group	N/A	s9(2)(a)
Fiona Weightman	Head of Communication and Public Engagement	N/A	s9(2)(a) ✓

Minister's office comments:

- Noted
- Seen
- Approved
- Needs change
-

- Withdrawn
- Not seen by Minister
- Overtaken by events
- Referred to

Please forward this report to MOF's office. It is my expectation that some aspects of the communications campaign will start to wind down (eg. vaccination messages)

APPROVAL TO SPEND APPROPRIATION ON PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	Report No. DPMC-2021/22-
--	-----------------------------

APPROVAL TO SPEND APPROPRIATION ON PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Background

1. As part of the New Zealand government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic an extensive public information campaign under the "Unite Against COVID-19" branding (UAC) was established. Launched in March 2020, it has included website, social media, and paid advertising including across television, print media, social and digital media, as well as targeted print and digital resources for key audiences.
2. The UAC information has informed, reassured, enabled, and signposted New Zealanders to information they have needed:
 - 61% of people agree or strongly agree that they have access to the information they want and need
 - 62% of people say that the Unite Against COVID-19 brand is clear and easy to understand (March 2022)
 - The UAC website had nearly 5 million page views in April and the UAC social media has almost half a million followers.
3. The emergence of different variants in New Zealand, the ongoing response, traffic light system, and Reconnecting New Zealand programme have led to a significant demand for public communications.
4. This messaging is particularly important through winter as we anticipate the complication of both COVID and other respiratory diseases in the community.
5. Heading into summer we also foresee the importance of communicating key health messaging during a period of both increased domestic travels, socialising and events, and a further influx of international tourists.
6. With the changing national and international environment, the UAC information, as an established brand, has a significant role in communicating with New Zealanders.

UAC communications tender details

7. The proposed tender for the 2022-23 UAC campaign will build on its existing information and profile as an acknowledged source of reputable information. The 2022/23 campaign will be at a reduced level and spend from 2021/22. s9(2)(h)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
8. Specifically, in the tender there will be the following sections:

APPROVAL TO SPEND APPROPRIATION ON PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	Report No. DPMC-2021/22-
--	-------------------------------------

- \$4.5 million for each 6-month period will go towards media buying. This includes the purchase of media space in TV, radio, digital, outdoor, social media and press channels. This also covers on-the-ground activities and the use of influencers through social media channels; This spend averages out at \$175k per week (a significant reduction from our full response previously at \$600k per week which allowed us to reach all NZ in a week). It is also more than a 40% reduction from our current baseline spend of \$300k per week. This will allow week-on week-off media, targeting messaging to priority audiences either demographically or regionally, or phasing our media spend.
 - \$1.5 million for each 6-month period is allocated to creative services including strategic advertising, concepting and production of advertisements and content – this is a reduction of approximately 20% from previous levels of spend. As messaging gets more targeted it requires more creative work ensuring that messages are tailored to each individual priority audience, in response to our research and feedback from priority communities.
9. Assuming there are no new significant variants or major new changes introduced within the next 6-12 months, the focus of this advertising and media spend will be on both managing and preventing COVID-19 ie: communicating what you and your household need to do if you or family have COVID-19, as well as encouraging key health behaviours including mask wearing, staying home when sick, hygiene, and ventilation. This takes the form of both informational messaging ie: communicating current rules and restrictions, and motivational messaging – communicating both encouraged behaviours and the reasons behind them. This has currently been through the ‘do it for others’ campaign.
10. The other major piece is continuing to communicate any changes to the COVID Protection Framework (CPF) including increasing to Red or decreasing to Green, as well as any changes to the CPF in the future. In addition, we will be communicating any changes in travel, PDT etc that emerge from Ministers’ decisions. Plus, amplifying, through our established channels, information on winter and on fourth doses.
11. The UAC COVID-19 team is working closely with colleagues at the Ministry of Health, Health New Zealand and the Māori Health Authority (MoH, HNZ and MHA) to ensure the existing value of the UAC brand supports and evolves over next year, to amplify any across government messaging. For example, UAC is currently supporting the planned winter wellness campaign by planning to use the UAC extensive reach to support hygiene and ‘stay well’ messages.
12. Key milestones achieved to date include:
- a. delivery of public information campaigns, including:
 - the ongoing Unite Against COVID-19 public health messages
 - Alert level changes
 - Vaccine campaign
 - I Scan New Zealand
 - “Two shots for Summer”
 - “Cover for Each Other” (face masks on public transport)
 - general health behaviours reminders including scanning, turn Bluetooth on, get a test, hygiene, and masks on public transport (continuous through the year)

- More to the COVID-19 Protection Framework
 - Mask Scan Pass
 - Booster Vaccines
 - 5-11-year-old vaccines
 - “Doing it for Each Other” (protecting those who are at higher risk)
- b. Various in-person, on-the-ground initiatives designed to support public health behaviours and compliance with response settings, especially focussed on youth, those moving around the country over holiday periods, high foot traffic/risk locations such as large events, malls and airports and businesses.

Effectiveness of the public relations and advertising spend

13. The Unite Against COVID-19 brand and associated advertising and channels are highly trusted (38%) and recognised (61%), and advertising continues to be regarded by the public key source of information. (NB: *these are high ratings for a brand*)
14. Analysis of website metrics shows that COVID19.govt.nz continues to be a key source of information for people in New Zealand to get reliable, timely information about COVID-19.
- Audience grew by more than 300% in 2021 when compared with 2020
 - 141 million-page views in the 12 months to 24 February 2021
 - Peaks in traffic are experienced around key announcements: 1 million users over 17/18 August 2021 when New Zealand moved to Alert Level 4, and 1.1 million users when New Zealand moved to Red in the Traffic light system.
15. Since January 2021:
- Facebook followers have increased by 63%, from 194,000 followers to 317,000 followers
 - Instagram followers have increased by 57%, from 60,000 followers to 94,000 followers
 - Twitter has grown by 88%, from 24,000 followers to 45,000 followers
 - TikTok followers have increased by 100% (start date August 2021) 13,000 followers.

Reporting to Minister of Finance

16. Recognising the interest that the Minister of Finance has in the COVID-19 Group’s approach to procurement and the effectiveness of the contracted vendors’ services with regards to communications and publicity expenditure, DPMC, working with the Treasury, will continue to provide quarterly updates to the Minister on both the effectiveness of spend and planned future expenditure.

Ministerial approval needed to continue funding public communications and engagement activities

17. The Chief Executive of DPMC has authority to approve spending under the COVID-19 Group’s appropriation. However, the Cabinet Office circular 18 (2) stipulates a spending limit of \$150,000 for publicity expenses and that spending above this limit requires approval from the relevant appropriation Minister, in this case yourself, as the Minister for COVID-19 Response.

18. DPMC has made a commitment to the Minister of Finance to go to an external tender for this communications campaigns work in 2022/23. To continue to have core information in the public arena in July 2022 we will need to go to tender the week of the 16 May for the up to \$12m spend (with an initial term of 6 months (until 30 December) at a cost of up to \$6 million).
19. Over the next weeks DPMC will come back to you to seek your approval for the Chief Executive to incur additional publicity expenses of up to \$9million. Of the total budget of up to \$21million, \$17million is allocated to campaign, communications and engagement activities. This includes up to \$12million for creative and media, and indicatively \$300k for research, \$800k for translation, \$800k printing, \$700k for development and maintenance of the Unite against COVID-19 website and support platforms, and \$2.4million for the development of other bespoke communications and campaigns, tailored to specific groups and communities. We will also cover consideration of different scenarios as we transition to a more sustainable approach to managing COVID-19.
20. Accordingly, it is recommended you provide an initial approval for the Chief Executive of DPMC to incur expenditure of up to \$12million in 2022/23 for public communications and engagement expenses associated with the DPMC COVID-19 Group's ongoing public information and engagement campaign.

Financial Implications

21. The proposed funding falls within the COVID-19 All of Government appropriation agreed to in [CAB-20-MIN-0100].

Consultation

22. DPMC is working with the Treasury to provide future updates as part of the quarterly COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund reporting to the Minister of Finance on both the effectiveness of spend and planned future expenditure.

Communications

23. Communications regarding this delegation will be handled in line with the communications approach being used across the All of Government response to COVID-19. This may include the proactive release of this paper.