

EFA FTI Country Level Process Guide

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The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) was launched in 2002 as a global partnership between donor and partner countries to ensure accelerated progress toward the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. All low-income countries that demonstrate commitment to achieving universal primary education can receive support from EFA FTI.

This paper was produced by FTI Secretariat. The current version is a working draft, additions and changes will be included over time.

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Note: This guide has been informed by the likelihood that EFA FTI will work in the near future with an EFA FTI Fund.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The EFA FTI Partnership

The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) is a global partnership focused on helping low-income countries to achieve the six EFA Goals including access for all children to a complete cycle of basic education. It does so by helping countries develop and implement a national Education Sector Plan or an Interim Education Plan. Countries that join the EFA FTI Partnership can expect [more funding for education, better aid](#), or both.

- ❖ *More funding* could include an increase in country-level financing from government and donors; and, if necessary, financing from the EFA FTI.
- ❖ *Better aid* should be greater aid effectiveness, with donors harmonizing and aligning their support around one comprehensive national Education Sector Plan or an Interim Education Plan.

1.2 What to expect when joining EFA FTI

EFA FTI offers the following support to countries that want to become FTI partners:

- ❖ Technical support as needed on plan development and implementation;
- ❖ Financial support for activities to develop an education plan and to support its implementation;
- ❖ Support to strengthen sector coordination and dialogue among the Government, donor partners and the civil society;
- ❖ Strategic information on global good practice, including cross-cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS, Gender, Disability or Out-of-school children; and
- ❖ Opportunities to exchange with other countries on education policy and practice.

Countries can join the EFA FTI Partnership with either [a comprehensive education sector plan](#) or [an interim education sector plan](#). This ensures that countries lacking the adequate level of human and institutional capacity, data resources, security, or social conditions to develop a comprehensive plan can still join the EFA FTI Partnership and call on its support.

- ✓ **A comprehensive plan** should [cover the whole education sector and span at least 3–5 years](#). It will include a results framework, monitoring and evaluation strategy, a comprehensive financing framework, and an implementation plan for at least the first year.
- ✓ **An interim plan will** usually [address targeted parts of the education system and is likely to be short to medium-term \(12 to 36 months\)](#). It should clearly state expected results and include a monitoring and evaluation strategy and financing framework, although these may be less comprehensive than for sector-wide plans. Importantly, it should indicate how capacity will be built to enable more comprehensive education strategies in the future.

1.3 About this Guide

The following guide is intended to give an overview of the basic process of joining and working within the EFA FTI Partnership at the country level. It is accompanied by **How To** notes that detail individual processes (Annex 1). To gain a better understanding of how country-level processes fit within the broader EFA FTI governance, please also read the [EFA FTI Framework](#) and the document on [Governance of the Partnership](#).

There are four main steps to joining the EFA FTI Partnership and a further step for countries that want to access financial or technical support from the EFA FTI.

1. Government determines what is needed to join EFA FTI
2. Government develops or strengthens an education plan
3. Appraisal and endorsement of education plan
4. Requesting EFA FTI Support (as needed)
5. Monitoring and reapplication for FTI resources

These are mapped out in the EFA FTI Process Chart on page 7, and elaborated in this guide.

This guide refers to and links to other EFA FTI knowledge products, such as the [Appraisal Guidelines](#), the [Capacity Development Guidelines](#), and the [Equity and Inclusion Tool](#), which can be found at the EFA FTI Web site: www.educationfasttrack.org

2 JOINING EFA FTI: GETTING STARTED

2.1 Who Does What

The first step for a partner country to belong to the EFA FTI Partnership is to endorse an Education Sector Plan. A country interested in EFA FTI endorsement should involve a broad range of key players (box 1). Getting an early understanding of EFA FTI processes and who will do what at the country level is an important first step. In particular, the Local Education Group (LEG) should nominate a Coordinating Agency immediately. Later, if EFA FTI financial or technical resources are required, one or more Supervising Entities should be nominated to manage EFA FTI funding and activities. Countries with existing aid coordination structures will already include many of the bodies listed below.

Box 1: Key Players

Government, in consultation with its partners, is responsible for developing and implementing an education plan. The government works with the Local Donor Group and Civil Society Organizations to ensure efficient monitoring of the implementation of the plan, where possible through Joint Sector Reviews, and to ensure that evaluations of the plan are carried out periodically.

The Local Education Group (LEG) is made up of the government and other partners, including the Local Donor Group, who work together at the country level to develop, appraise, endorse, implement, monitor, and evaluate the plan. The architecture of the Local Education Group, including the specific composition, title, and working arrangements will vary from country to country. If humanitarian coordination ('education cluster') is functioning in the country, efforts should be made to ensure coherence and coordination with the LEG.

The Local Donor Group (LDG) comprises self-selected representatives from bilateral and multilateral agencies and other donors as well as civil society organizations. Its members support the development, endorsement, and implementation of an education plan, take an active role in the preparation of Joint Sector Reviews and sharing of the reports with the FTI Secretariat, and ensure that funding decisions are made in consultation with their representatives at headquarters.

Civil Society Organizations engage in constructive dialogue that supports the development and implementation of the ESP at the country level. They seek operational links with organizations or groups working in both service provision and advocacy toward the achievement of EFA.

The Coordinating Agency is designated by the Local Donor Group in consultation with the partner government. It acts as the communications link between the government of the partner country, the Local Donor Group, and the FTI Secretariat. The Coordinating Agency is responsible for leading all FTI-related activities from the development partner side.

And two further players if a country receives funds from the EFA FTI:

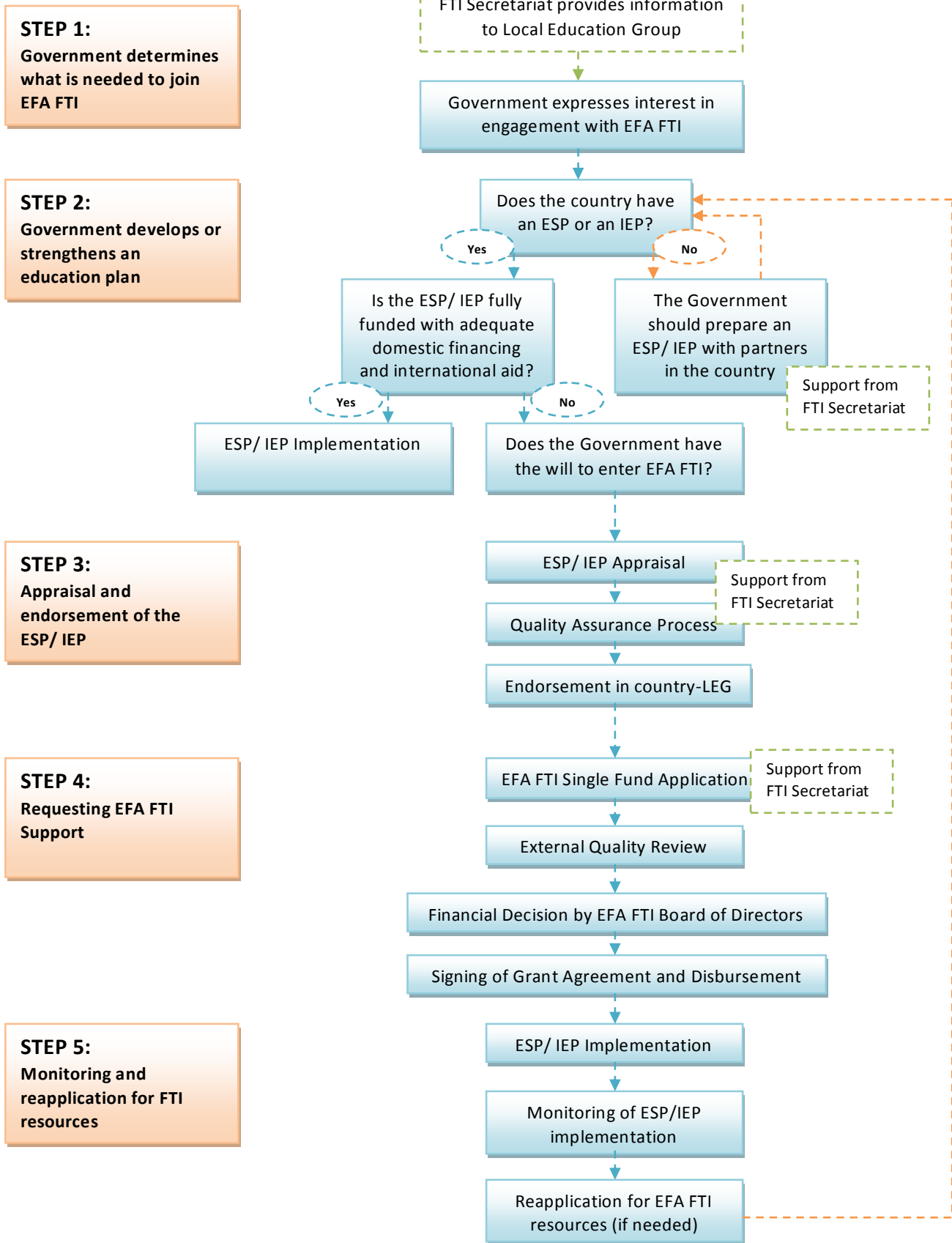
The Supervising Entity (SE) is designated by the Local Education Group and is responsible for supervising the activities financed by the EFA FTI Fund as agreed between the Local Education Group and the SE. Any bilateral or multilateral agency can act as SE, provided it can fulfill this role satisfactorily and the Local Education Group can justify having chosen that agency (see **How To** note). It is important that the SE and the Coordinating Agency work closely together on EFA FTI processes but that the Coordinating Agency remains the overall lead. The program that a SE develops in consultation with the Local Education Group to deliver EFA FTI funds will comply with the SE own norms and procedures.

The Implementer carries out part or all of the program supported by the FTI at the country level. It is typically the Government but any organization (e.g. UN agency, donor, the World Bank, civil society organization) can fulfill this role. The Implementer reports to the Supervising Entity.

2.2. The Progressive Approach

This section is under construction and will be included in a new version of the document to be posted later this year.

EFA FTI Process Step by Step Overview



3 EFA FTI PROCESS STEP BY STEP

Step 1: Government determines what is needed to join EFA FTI

Getting started

- The **FTI Secretariat provides information** and guidance to the Local Education Group to ensure the group clearly understands the EFA FTI Partnership’s country-level processes.
- If appropriate, the **government expresses interest in engagement with EFA FTI**, sending a letter to the Head of the FTI Secretariat.
- In consultation with the LEG, the country then decides whether it will submit a comprehensive or an interim education sector plan. Countries with an existing comprehensive or interim plan¹ assess whether these are ready for EFA FTI endorsement. The **FTI Appraisal Guidelines** should help frame this initial assessment. If the Local Education Group agrees that an existing plan, comprehensive or interim, is strong and credible, it will bypass Step 2 and take Step 3 of the EFA FTI process. All other countries will take Step 2.

Step 2: Government develops or strengthens an education plan (OPTIONAL)

Developing a credible plan

- Following the decision to join EFA FTI, the Local Education Group should consider the status and needs of the education sector and its context, and how best to build on what is already there. The exercise of 'taking stock' of the sector is an opportunity to gather all the relevant information together: data, reports, policies, legislation, budgets, institutional structures, projects and programs, etc. and to reflect on what is being done. .
- There are a number of **tools available** to support development of an education plan (see How to Note on cross-cutting issues).
- If needed, a **joint fiduciary review** should be undertaken to assess overall fiduciary capacity and the need for capacity development, and to help choose an effective and suitable modality for future donor support, including for financial support from the EFA FTI Fund.

¹ In the remainder of this document, “plan” will mean both “comprehensive” and “interim.”

Step 3: Appraisal and endorsement of the education plan

3.1 LEG produces a draft appraisal of the plan using the FTI Appraisal Guidelines

- The **Local Education Group** appraises the plan. The FTI Secretariat strongly advises that the Local Education Group bring in external technical support on this activity to introduce new perspectives. The **FTI Appraisal Guidelines** provide the framework for posing the pertinent questions and the **Progressive Approach** provides possible benchmarks that can be used to discuss current capacity and set appropriate targets in key areas.
- The Local Education Group discusses the appraisal report, often developed by external technical assistance, and agrees upon a final appraisal report.

3.2 FTI Secretariat support during appraisal

- Before endorsement of the plan is finalized, the plan and the appraisal report are shared with the FTI Secretariat. The FTI Secretariat reviews the plan and appraisal to ensure, through a Quality Assurance Process, these are consistent with the FTI guidance on education plan components and the FTI Appraisal Guidelines. A set of criteria and a checklist will be provided upfront to countries. If major concerns are raised, the Secretariat may request a delay in plan endorsement in order to agree a way forward in addressing these. The FTI Secretariat also provides guidance on the finalization of the endorsement process.

3.3 Plan finalization and recommendation for EFA FTI endorsement

- The government finalizes its plan, drawing on the conclusions of the plan appraisal and the results of the FTI quality review. The Local Education Group then meets for review, final appraisal, and endorsement. Donors are required to ensure endorsement is obtained at the highest appropriate country level and also at organization headquarters level. The Coordinating Agency informs the FTI Secretariat of the Local Education Group's endorsement; the Secretariat, in turn, informs the EFA FTI Partnership.

3.4 Agreeing on a common action agenda

- When the Local Education Group finalizes its appraisal report, it agrees on a common action agenda that supports the endorsed plan and addresses in weaknesses identified in the appraisal report. This will include further actions to strengthen the plan (policy decisions and actions on capacity development, public financial management and procurement reforms, and aid effectiveness).

3.5 Deciding on the need for further EFA FTI resources

- Donor organizations, at the appropriate level, confirm commitments and make plans for scaling up and aligning support for the plan. Any remaining financing needs are identified, factoring in additional domestic and external contributions. Low-income countries, if increased domestic and donor resources are insufficient to implement the endorsed plan, can apply for EFA FTI financial or technical resources. (For FTI financial support, restrictions may apply for IDA category III countries).
- If further financing is needed, at this point, discussions should begin among the LEG members on the nomination of a Supervising Entity. The choice of Supervising Entity (ies) will be partly driven by which agency can best support delivery of the activities needed through the preferred modality ([link to Supervising Entity How To note](#)).

Step 4: Requesting EFA FTI Support (OPTIONAL)

4.1 Accessing EFA FTI resources

There are two different stages at which countries can access EFA FTI resources:

1. *To develop and appraise a plan.* This would typically be a request for short-term funding and/or technical support ([link to EFA FTI support for Plan Development](#) **How To note**).
2. *To support implementation of the plan, including capacity development.* This is typically a 3-year request (1–3 years for an interim plan) for financial and or technical support. The new EFA FTI Fund will provide resources for both major plan implementation activities (formerly financed by the Catalytic Fund) and capacity development (formerly financed by the **Education Program Development Fund**). Different Supervising Entities may handle different aspects of this request.²

Financing ceilings are established at each stage for each country, based on the EFA FTI funding available and the relative need of the country. These are communicated to the country through the Coordinating Agency.

4.2 Available technical support

The FTI Secretariat offers the following technical support:

- ❖ **Resource Centers.** The FTI Secretariat will offer countries the technical support of a small number of specialist institutions through a “call-down resource center” arrangement. This includes provision of **consultancy services** as well as **information services** that will be strategically targeted to plan development and implementation. This arrangement is intended to facilitate FTI partner countries’ timely access to quality expertise and to reduce transaction costs.
- ❖ **FTI Secretariat.** The FTI Secretariat has scaled up its own capacity to work closely with FTI partner countries. The team will foster close ties and provide the support and guidance needed, both on FTI processes and on broader educational policy and planning issues. A small group of subject specialists can also provide support on a range of key policy issues (for example, education economics, public sector reform, equitable access) to partner countries.

4.3 Requesting financial or technical support

The LEG now prepares a request for EFA FTI support. The request should

- ✓ specify how EFA FTI resources will be used and how they will complement the government’s and other donors’ funding,
- ✓ summarize all domestic and external resources and explain the limitations on increasing bilateral and multilateral funding to cover the identified funding gap,
- ✓ specify the amount and duration of the requested EFA FTI support, and
- ✓ specify the agreed grant modality and the Supervising Entity/Entities.

² For example, the LEG decides it needs funding from EFA FTI for school construction, school grants, textbook procurement, and a range of capacity-building activities. It nominates one SE to lead on construction, teacher training and textbook procurement, and two other SEs to implement the capacity-building activities. Each SE is nominated based on its relative abilities to lead the different activities.

The request should include the following documentation:

- ✓The medium- or long-term plan and a detailed financing plan;
- ✓The appraisal report and endorsement of the plan by the LEG;
- ✓The implementation plan;
- ✓The program document;³ and
- ✓Additional documents upon request.

The EFA FTI Partnership anticipates countries will use one of the following three modalities as a channel for EFA FTI support ([link to EFA FTI modality guidelines](#)):

- 1. Sector/General Budget Support.** These are the EFA FTI Partnership's preferred modalities. Program documentation should indicate the share of education expenditures that will be covered by EFA FTI financing in the case of sector budget support.
- 2. Pooled funding.** In countries with an operational joint financing mechanism, it is expected that EFA FTI financing will co-fund it. It is important to show the share of the joint fund that will be covered by EFA FTI financing and how the joint fund complements the efforts of government and donors outside the joint fund.
- 3. Standalone project.** This may be the only option where a more aligned modality is not in operation or is for some reason not appropriate. If a more aligned modality exists, the request for EFA FTI support must explain why it is not being used. Project documentation must show how project activities are delivering key elements of the plan and how they complement the activities of others.

4.4 Review of requests for EFA FTI support

- An external panel of education specialists will conduct an [External Quality Review](#) of the final application for EFA FTI support once it is formally submitted to the FTI Secretariat. This desk review adds to the earlier assessment conducted by the FTI Secretariat and provides a short analysis and assessment of the application. The FTI Secretariat shares these findings with the Local Education Group, which provides a formal response to any issues raised. The Secretariat then transmits the appraisal and the country's response to the Financial Advisory Committee of the EFA FTI Board of Directors, which recommends an appropriate funding allocation to the Board of Directors.
- The Board of Directors considers the request and makes the final decision about whether to allocate funding and at what level. The FTI Secretariat will formally notify the country of the final decision and agreed allocation.
- Final arrangements are made for the EFA FTI allocation to be transferred to the agency(s) or donor(s) nominated as Supervising Entity(s). In most cases, the Supervising Entity(s) will then enter a grant arrangement with the partner country.

³ For a pooled fund, this may be the pooled fund agreement as signed by government and donors; for a standalone project or program, this would normally be a project document in line with the SE's agency norms.

Step 5: Monitoring plan implementation and reapplication for FTI resources

5.1 Monitoring implementation

- All Local Education Groups are required to provide to the FTI Secretariat (on behalf of the EFA FTI Partnership), through the Coordinating Agency, an [annual sector progress report](#) on plan implementation. When feasible, implementation of the plan should be monitored through a [Joint Sector Review \(JSR\)](#) ([link to How To note on JSR](#)).
- The EFA FTI can provide financial and technical support to build monitoring and evaluation capacity if needed.
- Detailed guidance is being developed on required reporting for EFA FTI Fund grants.

5.2 Reporting on progress at the end of an EFA FTI grant

- The Local Education Group is required to submit, through the CA, an EFA FTI Grant [Completion Report](#) ([link to template](#)) when all EFA FTI resources are expended.

5.3 Reapplication for EFA FTI resources, if necessary

- At least 1 year (6 months to 1 year for Interim Education Plans) before the closing of the EFA FTI grant, and preferably as a part of the Joint Sector Review, the LEG should consider the need for further support from the EFA FTI and whether it is necessary to update the plan. Countries which have not fully expended an existing FTI grant should not consider applying for new FTI funds unless full engagement or disbursement before a new grant application is guaranteed.
- Countries seeking further support from the Partnership should re-endorse any plan that has been significantly modified from the version that was previously endorsed or if the expiration of the previous plan requires a new plan to be developed. A new request for EFA FTI support will be informed by the EFA FTI Grant Completion Report including an explanation of what has been achieved since the previous allocation, both in the sector as a whole and with EFA FTI resources.
- In the case of a country with an interim education plan, the LEG should also consider whether there is now sufficient capacity to develop and implement a comprehensive sector plan.

HOW TO NOTES (with links to website)

- How to elaborate an Education Plan? (+checklist)
- **What is an Interim Education Plan? (available in the website)**
- Progressive Approach
- Supervising Entities / Coordinating Agencies/ Implementers
- Appraisal Guidelines
- Joint Fiduciary Assessments
- External Quality Review and Quality Assurance Process (2 step process)
- Check list for endorsement and requests
- Cross Cutting issues (gender, HIV/AIDS, equity and inclusion, child labor)
- Learning outcomes
- EFA FTI Fund
- Joint Sector Review (JSR)
- Focal Point system
- EFA FTI support for Education Plans Development (including Capacity Development)