GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for EDUCATION

BOD/2016/10 DOC 04
Board of Directors Meeting
October 18, 2016
Audio Conference

TARGETED FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE "BETTER EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE" (BELDS) INITIATIVE – REPORT FROM THE GOVERNANCE, ETHICS, RISK AND FINANCE COMMITTEE (GERF)

For Decision

1. STRATEGIC PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this Paper is for the Board to consider the recommendation from the Governance, Ethics, Risk and Finance Committee to approve the targeted financing arrangements for the BELDS initiative.

Summary of GERF Deliberations

The GERF met on September 22 via audio call to discuss the proposal; and recommended the proposal for Board approval.

The following main points were discussed:

- One was the request for a framework for targeted financing for KGPE under which this and other proposals sit. The Secretariat clarified that the KGPE options paper the Board approved in June included a concept note for BELDS that provided such a framework, and has clarified this point in this paper.
- A second was the need to maintain focus on results rather than activities, and alignment of those results with national sector plans. The Secretariat clarified the GERF paper sought approval to receive and use the funds to achieve the aims set out in BELDS concept note the BOD preapproved in June. It noted that the BELDS concept note approved at the June Board does define a clear result framework that is linked to the GPE2020 Results in early childhood education.
- A third point was that BELDS secretariat executed capacity development activities should involve a range of in-country partners including civil society. The Secretariat clarified that a range of in-country partners would be included in all proposed activities. The Secretariat also amended the Board paper to clarify that it will work with GPE partners to provide the technical assistance and activities identified as being funded from 'secretariat administered funds' .
- A fourth was the small grants to countries should not increase GPE fragmentation and transaction costs for countries. The Secretariat agreed, has clarified this intention in the paper, and will work with CGPC to ensure harmonization and mitigate these risks.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 At the June 2016 Board meeting, as part of the proposal submitted to the Board to strengthen country capacity through knowledge and good practice exchange, the Board approved the pre-designation of two thematic initiatives for targeted financing for KGPE. Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) and Assessment for Learning (A4L), as set out in Annex 2 and 3 to BOD/2016/06 DOC 16. The approved KGPE Strategy provided a full description of the BELDS initiative (Annex 1 – BELDS Concept Note), which included an overview of the proposed activities, goals, outputs and results indicators, and explained how BELDS would contribute to GPE2020 Strategic Goals and results.

2.2 The proposed initiative will be initially funded by four foundations (Open Society Foundations, Conrad Hilton Foundation, Comic Relief and Dubai Cares), with a total pledged amount of USD$2 million over 2 years. Other funders may join the initiative during this period.

2.3 The BELDS funding will be received into the GPE pooled fund, through a signed contribution agreement with the funders.

2.4 BELDS funding of USD$2 million will be used over the course of 2017 and 2018 to help achieve ECCE-related indicators in the GPE results framework and strengthen core business by supporting and linking together countries eligible for BELDS funding:

- USD$1 million will be used for Secretariat administered activities working closely with and through partners focused on developing national level capacity – cross national workshops, knowledge exchange activities across developing country partners, and the creation of tools, guidelines and documentation of best practice, along with one additional program specialist to manage the initiative and support in-country capacity building. These expenses will be accounted for separately from the core Secretariat budget and the staff position will not form part of the core Secretariat headcount as the position is specifically tied to these funds, unless otherwise determined by the Board.
- The remaining funds - initially US$1 million plus any additional targeted donor contributions raised - will be used to provide countries with small grants to support improved planning, analysis and data, possibly operationalized through a modified Education Sector Plan Development Grant window. These small grants will aim to support improved analysis, data collection and policy development to support quality early learning programs at scale. The process and guidelines for these grants will be subject to approval by the Country Grants and Performance Committee and be as streamlined as possible to minimize transaction costs for participating countries.

3. RECOMMENDED DECISION

3.1 The GERF recommends that the Board approve the following decision:

BOD/2016/10-XX—Operationalization of BELDS Initiative: The Board of Directors:

1. Approves the receipt and use of targeted financing for the BELDS initiative into the GPE pooled fund as outlined in BOD/2016/09 DOC 03.
2. Delegates authority to the Country Grants and Performance Committee to approve potential revisions to the Education Sector Plan Development Grants process and guidelines to accommodate the incorporation of funding for the BELDS small grants.
3. Delegates authority to the Governance, Ethics, Risk, and Finance Committee to approve the arrangements for any additional targeted contributions in support of BELDS small grants.
4. Delegates authority for potential revisions to the BELDS financing arrangements following final Foundation Board sign off to the Governance, Ethics, Risk, and Finance Committee, who may refer to matter back to the Board.
5. Requests the Secretariat to update the GERF, CGPC and SPC committees and Board on the status of this work on an annual basis.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 At the June 2016 Board meeting, as part of the proposal submitted to the Board to strengthen country capacity through knowledge and good practice exchange, the Board approved the pre-designation of the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative, as set out in a concept note in Annex 2 of BOD/2016/06 DOC 16 as part of a framework for building capacity in the GPE2020 goal to improve equitable learning outcomes.

4.2 Four foundations (Open Society Foundation, Conrad Hilton Foundation, Comic Relief and Dubai Cares) are currently in discussions with the Secretariat to provide a total of US$2 million through the GPE Fund in support of BELDS. Other funders may later join the initiative.

4.3 With its focus on strengthening national capacity and evidence based planning and inclusive policy dialogue, the initiative will collaborate and complement the activities of the Early Learning Partnership at the World Bank and the recently announced UNICEF/World Bank Early Childhood Development Alliance, in addition to work of other non-governmental organizations and foundations. Its contribution to both initiatives would be through its focus on improving the education sector analysis, planning, and information systems needed to inform improvements at scale in ECCE.

4.4 The BELDS funding will be received into the GPE pooled fund, through a standard signed contribution agreement with these foundation funders.

4.5 The budget below describes how the BELDS funding will be used:

- Over a two year period USD$ 1 million will be used for Secretariat administered activities working with and through partners focused on strengthening in-country capacity of a range of state and non-state actors. Collaborations with institutions working in the field of ECCE and RFPs for in-country partners will be used to develop and implement cross national workshops, knowledge exchange activities

across developing country partners, and the creation of tools, guidelines and documentation of best practice.

- Secretariat administered funding will also include funds for a program specialist to manage the BELDS activities and support capacity development at country level.
- BELDS will include a small grants window, with an initial budget of US$1 million but which will increase if additional targeted contributions are made available. The grants will be streamlined, lock together existing activities, and map on to GPE's business model so as to minimize transaction costs for participating countries and harmonize activities. One way they may be operationalized is through a modified ESPDG window. These small grants will aim to support improved analysis, data collection and policy development to support quality early learning programs at scale.

BELDS FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS

	Year 1	Total (Overall) Project Budget Year 2	TOTAL
Start Date	2017	2018	
Secretariat Administered Funding			
1. Knowledge building, generation and dissemination, including cross national workshops, and DCP exchange.	320,000	320,000	640,000
2. Full time BELDS coordinator *inclusive of benefits and taxes	180,000	180,000	360,000
Subtotal Secretariat Executive Funds	$500,000	$500,000	1,000,000
BELDS SMALL GRANTS via ESPDG WINDOW			
3. BELDS Country Small Grants to support ECCE planning, analysis and evidence building.	500,000	500,000	1, 000,000
Subtotal Small Grants	500,000	500,000	1,000,000
GRAND TOTAL	1,000,000	1,000,000	2,000,000

4.6 The proposed initiative's activities (described in Annex 1) aim to achieve the following objectives:

1. Convene cohorts of developing country partners interested in building knowledge and good practice exchange on how to strengthen quality early childhood education within national education systems in order to improve learning and equity.

2. Strengthen capacity of developing country partners to plan and implement nationally owned education sector plans that include discrete focus on quality and equitable early childhood education.
3. Promote inclusive and evidence-based national policy dialogue on early childhood education, through government-led local education groups (LEGs) and the joint sector review process, with participation from civil society, teachers' organizations, the private sector, and all development partners.
4. Strengthen global and cross-national commitment to effective and efficient financing for early childhood education.

4.7 The Secretariat will explore and consult with the CGPC on means to operationalize BELDS small grants to support country planning, analysis and policy development minimizing fragmentation and transaction costs for participating country partners. One option is to operationalize the small-scale grants through a third window within the existing ESPDG grant windows (presently there are two windows, one for education sector analysis and the second for education sector plan development). The aim is to ensure alignment of the small grants within the country led planning process, ownership and engagement of the LEG, and the lowest possible transaction costs.

4.8 The Secretariat will continue to work on eligibility and allocations, costing, and estimated impact on sector planning, as well as work with the CGPC to explore details regarding the creation of this third window, including any necessary amendments to the existing ESPDG guidelines and procedures.

4.9 Final Foundation Board sign off is after GPE Board approval and should any material revisions be made to the proposal, the Secretariat would approval from GERF, who they may decide to refer the matter to the Board.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR SECRETARIAT RESOURCES

5.1 The funding will support a program specialist whose primary responsibilities will be to manage the collaborations with partners, handle the process RFP processes and ensuing grant arrangements, and support in-country capacity building by ensuring the implementation of range of knowledge-related work including cross national workshops, knowledge exchange activities across developing country partners, and the creation of tools, guidelines and documentation of best practice. These expenses will be accounted for separately from the core Secretariat budget and the staff position will not form part of the core Secretariat headcount as the position is specifically tied to these funds, unless otherwise determined by the Board.

6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 If the Board approves any recommendation, the Secretariat will work with the Trustee and the foundations involved to finalize the contribution agreement to the GPE Fund.

6.2 In parallel, the Secretariat will develop for CGPC consideration, the procedures for the BELDS-ESPDG window, and agree on amendments to the ESPDG guidelines, application template and Country Lead Assessment.

6.3 Based on these arrangements, the Secretariat will recruit the program specialist, commence arrangements for the Secretariat administered activities, and work with interested and eligible countries to facilitate their grant applications under this window.

6.4 The Secretariat will keep the Committees and Board informed of progress on a regular basis

7. PLEASE CONTACT Karen Mundy (kmundy@globalpartnership.org) for further information.

8. ANNEXES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

This paper includes the following annex:

Annex 1 – Description of BELDS activities

Further information:

- June 14-15 2016 Board Paper on Knowledge and Good Practice Exchange, including Concept Note on Belds
- September 22, 2016 GERF paper on Targeted Financing Arrangements for BELDS is available on the eTeam site.

Annex 1 – Description of BELDS activities

Activity #1

Develop policy and knowledge products on systems approaches to ECCE

Knowledge products will be a core component of BELDS, and will be made available through GPE webpages with interactive visualizations, in order to provide an accessible and transparent way to see progress that countries are making in scaling up early childhood care and education. This will include updated lists of countries, allocations, coordinating/supervising entities, and timelines for education sector plans and projects. Knowledge products will contribute to public dialogue and knowledge on system actions that accelerate the overall pace of progress in scaling up early childhood education - and provide a platform for developing county partners to build on. Example activities are listed in Panel 1.

Activity #2

Regional and cross-national workshops related to knowledge sharing and good practice of systems approaches to ECCE

GPE will convene a series of regional and global workshops (including virtual participation) to bring together stakeholders facing similar challenges in early care and childhood education, accelerate knowledge-sharing, good practice and mutual problem-solving, and facilitate the sharing of relevant resources and common tools to support ECCE policy sector analysis and planning (e.g., costing, monitoring and assessment tools, evidence-based programs). GPE workshops provide highly valued spaces for peer exchange between South-South and South-North-South partnerships – and in this case, will create country-generated views of the challenges facing partners related to ECCE policy planning and potential solutions.

Activity #3

Strengthening education sector planning

The cohort would be highly collaborative and building what exists in each country and drawing from global expertise on how to build better education systems that include a sufficient focus on quality early childhood care and education. Developing country partners will have the opportunity to engage in knowledge and best practice activities (knowledge and good practice workshops, peer exchange) to support the development of education sector plans. GPE will facilitate the sharing of relevant knowledge products, resources and tools for the BELDS cohort to use for policy planning and implementation. BELDS will leverage on GPE's business model to support the inclusion of early childhood education in sector planning and development. It will also support the process of crowding in domestic and other sources of finance to ensure that early childhood education is better resourced.

Activity #4

Building inclusive dialogue

A key area of GPE's work is promoting more inclusive dialogue by supporting LEGS and the engagement of civil society, teachers' organizations and others. It is recognized that ECCE government staff are rarely at the table for LEG meetings. The BELDS initiative will promote participation of ECCE government staff and stakeholders in education sector policy dialogue. The BELDS cohort will be linked to a global network to allow for experiences and lessons shared

among regional and national stakeholders, contributing to a global knowledge bank of effective approaches and conditions that facilitate systems approaches to early childhood education. The iterative processes between knowledge and best practice exchange, combined with technical and financial support in the policy planning stage, will inform policy dialogue and help to identify local innovations that hold promise but require additional technical support, funding or capacity building to bring to scale.

Activity #5
Small-scale grants
The BELDS cohort would receive small grants and corresponding technical assistance to support the inclusion of early childhood education in sector analysis and planning. Funds could be used for the generation and analysis of data and research on equity and learning outcomes, such as disaggregating existing data to better capture ECCE services for underserved areas and populations (poor, the rural, children with disabilities, girls).