

Guidelines *for*
**Education Sector Plan
Development Grants - ESPDG**

December 2018



GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP
for EDUCATION

‘GPE is founded on the principle of collective support for a single country-led process toward the development, endorsement, and implementation of an Education Sector Plan or Transitional Education Plan, with the government leading and having the responsibility for implementing its policies and plans.’

| GPE Country-level Process Guide, see link, page iv.

CONTENTS

Useful documents	iv
I. Introduction	1
II. Features of the ESPDG	2
II.1 Purpose	
II.2 Eligibility	
II.3 Activities	
II.4 Amount	
II.5 Duration	
II.6 ESPDG grant agent	
II.7 Roles and responsibilities	
III. Grant application process	9
Step 1: Identification of scope of work, activities and timeline and selection of currency	
Step 2: Development of the ESPDG application	
Step 3: Submission of the application	
Step 4: Screening	
Step 5: Approval	
IV. Grant administration and monitoring	14
IV.1. General management	
IV.2 Revisions	
IV.3 Risk mitigation	
IV.4 Completion	
IV.5 Reporting	
Annexes	18
Annex 1: Quality standards for an ESP	
Annex 2: Quality standards for a TEP	
Annex 3: Guiding questions for the preparation of concept notes	
Annex 4: Quality assurance for ESP / TEP development roadmaps	

Note to the user

In addition to these guidelines, applicants are encouraged to use the *GPE Country-level Process Guide* as a reference and read through it before preparing the ESPDG application to gain a quick overview of the GPE’s funding model, its underlying principles and processes and the general roles and responsibilities of key players.

USEFUL DOCUMENTS

<p>Other documents related to the ESPDG package</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESPDG Application Form • Roadmap for ESP / TEP Development - Template • ESPDG Grant Completion Report Template
<p>Documents related to education sector analysis and plan preparation and appraisal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPE/IIEP ESP Preparation Guidelines • GPE/IIEP ESP Appraisal Guidelines • GPE/IIEP TEP Preparation Guidelines • GPE/IIEP Thematic Mapping – a Complement to the TEP Preparation Guidelines • TEP Appraisal Guidelines (forthcoming) • Education Sector Methodological Guidelines, Vol. 1 • Education Sector Methodological Guidelines, Vol. 2
<p>Other documents referenced in these guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPE 2020 • GPE Country-level Process Guide • ToR for Grant Agents • ESPIG Guidelines • GPE Charter • Policies and Communications Protocol on Misuse of GPE Trust Fund
<p>Board document referenced in these guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BOD/2014/05—DOC 03: Operational Framework for Requirements and Incentives in the Funding Model.



GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP
for EDUCATION

I. Introduction

GPE's Strategic Plan 2020 supports the Sustainable Development Goal 4 of ensuring inclusive and quality education for all by building stronger education systems for achieving improvements in education equity and learning. To this end, the GPE Fund¹ provides three types of country-level grants that are all closely linked to country commitment, performance, and nationally identified needs. The three grants are paced to support specific purposes at different stages of the policy cycle: (1) Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG); (2) Program Development Grant (PDG); and (3) Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG).

These guidelines explain the ESPDG which, with funding of up to US\$ 500,000, provides support to the education sector planning process, including sector analysis for which half of the grant is earmarked (US\$ 250,000). The ESPDG is a key lever for further GPE funding and a building block in the creation of stronger education systems capable of delivering improvements in equity and learning. It can support the development of an Education Sector Plan (ESP) or, depending on the specific country context, that of a Transitional Education Plan (TEP). A TEP is suitable for countries where the education sector operates in a particularly challenging and complex context for instance when a country is emerging from conflict. A transitional education plan should help move the country toward developing a comprehensive education sector plan.

ESPDG's added value

The grant adds value to sector planning and implementation, because it helps ensure that education aid, including that from GPE, is based on a solid, nationally owned analysis of the challenges in delivering quality basic education, and at the same builds institutional capacity to deliver education services equitably and efficiently.

The guidelines are primarily intended for the local education group, including the government leading the analysis and plan development process, and the development partners supporting the government. They are likewise intended for the grant agent in charge of preparing the ESPDG proposal and administering the grant, and the coordinating agency whose role it is to facilitate and support a collaborative process among stakeholders. The guidelines describe the main features of the grant and provide step-by step guidance for the grant application process, including guidance for each expected deliverable. It also provides general guidance for managing the grant, and specifies the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved.

¹ The fund was launched in 2011 and replaced a number of previously existing funds including the Catalytic Fund (CF) and the Education Program Development Fund (EPDF). The GPE Board of Directors governs the Fund and the World Bank is the GPE Trustee.

II. Features of the ESPDG

II.1. Purpose

A common vision and roadmap to guide the ESP / TEP development process

To serve the purposes of the ESPDG, the grant application process is designed to help country teams conceptualize an integrated roadmap for guiding the development of ESPs and TEPs that meet the requirements of the GPE funding model.

While the development and adoption of sector-wide policies and education plan is the responsibility of the government, the purpose of the ESPDG is to support effective and inclusive dialogue during this process. As governments and local education groups come together to develop ESPs or TEPs, GPE proposes a systematic approach aimed at developing quality plans that development partners are ready to endorse and which meets the GPE funding requirements.

The GPE funding model 2015-2018 requires that countries which are eligible and decide to apply for an ESPIG submit an ESP or TEP that is independently appraised and endorsed by in-country development partners. ESPs and TEPs are expected to meet the quality standards as defined in the GPE/IIEP guidelines on respectively ESP and TEP preparation and summarized in **Annex 1 and 2**.

GPEs strategic goals		
<p><u>Goal 1:</u> Improved and more equitable student learning outcomes through quality teaching and learning.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved learning outcomes at primary level More children under 5 years developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial wellbeing. <p><u>More information:</u> GPE 2020, see page iv.</p>	<p><u>Goal 2:</u> Increased equity, gender equality and inclusion for all in a full cycle of quality education, targeting the poorest and most marginalized, including by gender, disability, ethnicity, and conflict or fragility</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of children in school supported by GPE Improved primary and lower secondary completion rates, total and by gender Increased pre-primary enrollment Reduced out-of-school rates, total and by gender Improved equity indicators in lower secondary completion rates (gender, geography and wealth) 	<p><u>Goal 3:</u> Effective and efficient education systems delivering equitable quality educational services for all.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased public expenditure on education Equitable allocation of teachers Improved ratios of pupils to trained teachers Reduced student dropout and repetition rates Improved data reporting Improved learning assessment systems

A grant application must demonstrate that all goods and services to be financed through the grant are directly linked to sector planning and the development or revision of an ESP or TEP, and that the forward-looking sector analytical and plan preparation work is fully incorporated into the ESP / TEP policy and implementation cycle. It is further expected that work supported through the ESPDG will align with ongoing strategies to build individual, organizational and institutional capacities in the national systems charged with sector analysis and planning.

The ESPDG is intended to be *additional* and complement other funding sources, and the resulting ESP or TEP is expected to be aligned with GPE's strategic goals, collectively supported by GPE partners and member countries.

II.2. Eligibility

Currently all Lower and Lower-Lower Middle Income Countries, as classified by GPE eligibility categories, are eligible to apply for the ESPDG. Upper-Lower Middle Income Countries are also eligible if their Primary Completion Ratio (PCR) is below 85%, and all IDA-eligible Small Island and Small Landlocked Developing States are also eligible.

In addition to GPE member countries of the above categories, eligible countries that are not already a member of GPE may apply for this grant based on an initial communication from the country government indicating interest in joining the GPE (see *GPE Country-level Process Guide*, page iv). Eligibility for the ESPDG does not necessarily mean that a GPE member country will subsequently be eligible for an ESPIG as this eligibility is determined using a specific methodology.

II.3. Activities

Reference documents

The following offers guidance on recommended approaches and methodologies for sector analysis and planning, and reflect the overall framework within which the ESPDG activities fall.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Education Sector Analysis: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines, Volume 1</i> • <i>Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines, Volume 2</i> |
| Education Sector Plans: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation,</i> • <i>GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal</i> |
| Transitional Education Plans: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Transitional Education Sector Plan Preparation</i> • <i>GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Transitional Education Plan Appraisal</i> |

The ESPDG provides funding for activities that lead to the development or revision of an ESP or a TEP, through two financing windows:

- 1) Education sector analysis and
- 2) ESP / TEP development and appraisal

While there is considerable flexibility as to the specific analyses, studies and activities that can be funded, the GPE/IIEP guidelines on respectively ESP or TEP preparation serve as a reference in determining whether a submitted proposal falls within the scope of the ESPDG. Likewise, the corresponding GPE/IIEP appraisal guidelines are used as a basis in the independent assessment of the draft ESP / TEP. Independent reviewers are trained in the guidelines which are mandatory for them to use to ensure that the plans are consistently assessed against the quality standards that countries need to meet, if they intend and are eligible to apply for an ESPIG (see below).

The activities of the ESPDG are expected to be defined and planned through a consultative process within the local education group led by the government, and be part of a broader roadmap (see III, step1) that outlines the key phases, quality assurance milestones and activities for how the country teams will develop the ESP or TEP. The rationale for financing and the nature of activities that can be covered through the ESPDG under its two financing windows are described below.

Financing window 1: Education sector analysis activities

Funding model requirement - a sector analysis

“Countries applying for an ESPIG must have conducted an education sector analysis no more than three years prior to the grant application submission, as the basis for the development or revision of an Education Sector Plan.

In fragile contexts, a TEP must include a time-bound plan to carry out an education analysis. The analysis should include context analysis, including demographic analysis, as well as analysis of existing policies, costs and financing, system performance and system capacity. The analysis must address vulnerability and equity, particularly the situation of education for marginalized groups, including girls and children with disabilities.”

From:

BOD/2014/05-DOC 03: Operational Framework for Requirements and Incentives in the Funding Model, p.8.

The first financing window, which supports education sector analyses, reflects a GPE’s funding model requirement and is part of GPE’s data strategy. The ESPDG activities and technical services under this financing window should serve to fill existing gaps and seek, whenever feasible, to build government capacity in different aspects of sector analysis. Activities may cover:

- Comprehensive analysis - e.g. country status report, and diagnostics and analysis of the country’s current education system

- Targeted analysis – e.g. needs diagnosis and/or policy assessments, including public finance analysis (PFM) or service delivery studies, in view of improving the ESP / TEP in areas related to equity, efficiency and learning outcomes
- Capacity building in specific methodological approaches, monitoring and evaluation.
- Consultations to ensure a participatory process
- Technical services
- Peer review arrangements, and
- Dissemination and knowledge exchange.

A PFM analysis, assessing the extent to which current management systems are underpinned by goals of prudent fiscal decisions, reliable and efficient transactions and institutionalized accountability, is needed and a good practice to inform the local education group in the context of its task of identifying and agreeing on the most appropriate funding modality for the ESPIG (*ESPIG Guidelines*, see page iv). Therefore, in case no recent PFM analysis is available for the education sector, this can be part of financing window 1 and its budget ceiling (see II.4)

Financing window 2: ESP / TEP development activities

Funding model requirement - a 'credible' education plan

'A credible ESP includes evidence-based strategies for access to quality basic education for all, covers all subsectors and both formal and non-formal education, is appropriately balanced across subsectors, and focuses on the learner as the central beneficiary. The feasibility of the ESP should be ensured by paying attention to financial, technical, and political constraints and stakeholder ownership, and the ESP should be context-sensitive with regard to vulnerabilities such as conflicts, natural disasters, and economic crises'.

From:

BOD/2014/05-DOC 03:

Operational Framework for Requirements and Incentives in the Funding Model, p.6, see page iv.

The second financing window provides funding for the activities that logically follow the completion of the sector analysis, and supports the development of an ESP or a TEP, and the organization, conduct, and follow-up of the independent assessment. As above, activities and technical services under this financing window should seek, whenever feasible to build government capacity, and may cover:

- Development or revision of sector strategy, programs and actions
- Development of multi-year operational plans and medium-term expenditure frameworks
- Technical services
- Capacity-building in specific areas related to planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Consultations to ensure a participatory process

- Independent assessment of the ESP or TEP and follow up of its recommendations
- Dissemination of the ESP / TEP or operational plans to a broader audience.

GPE funding model

GPE member countries that have received notification of an indicative allocation for an ESPIG must meet the above requirements as well as other requirements of the GPE funding model in order to access part or all of the Maximum Country Allocation, and should therefore tailor the ESPDG activities accordingly. All requirements are summarized in the ESPIG guidelines, based on the Board adopted funding model.

More information:

ESPIG Guidelines, see page iv.

Operational Framework for Requirements and Incentives in the Funding Model, see page iv.

II.4. Amount

GPE-financed activities should demonstrate value for money. The maximum amount of funding that can be obtained through an ESPDG is US\$ 500,000. US\$ 250,000 of this amount is earmarked specifically for sector analyses (Financing Window 1), whereas the remaining US\$250,000 can be used for additional analytic work, if deemed needed, as well as the actual process of developing the sector plan based on the preceding analysis (Financing Window 2). GPE funding is expected to be *additional* and *contribute* to overall costs. ESPDG applications are therefore expected to demonstrate government as well as other partner support to the development of the ESP / TEP.

Countries may apply for each of the two funding windows once in a three-year period, enabling countries to conduct either a full sector analysis or update the most recent analysis for each successive medium term of the implementation.

Paced funding

Applicants are encouraged to apply for the two different ESPDG funding windows at different times, as the outcomes of the sector analysis will likely influence the definition of the ESP development activities.

II.5. Duration

The duration for completing grant activities will vary depending on the different timeframe of either the ESP or TEP development process. For an ESP, a plan preparation process may take from 12 to 24 months, depending on several factors, in particular whether or not a good information base exists; whether the plan is the first education sector plan to be developed in the country or an existing plan is simply being reviewed. For a TEP, the timeline is shorter because of the purpose of a transitional plan, and would typically be between six to nine months.

II.6. ESPDG grant agents

Terms of Reference

The *Terms of Reference for Grant Agents* outline the operational framework and expectations of grant agents, including:

- Overall objectives
- Selection criteria and process
- Minimum standards for grant administration
- Responsibilities entrusted to grant agents
- Financial and budgetary arrangements

More information:

Terms of Reference for Grant Agents, see page iv.

GPE grants are transferred to the country-level through grant agents, who are accountable for the use of the resources throughout the grant cycle. For the ESPDG, there can be one or two different grant agents in order to cover the two financing windows of sector analysis and ESP / TEP development (see II.3).

The selection process of the ESPDG grant agent should be transparent and kept as simple as possible to ensure low transaction costs. The selection is decided by the government and endorsed by the other members of the local education group based on the capacity of the agency to provide technical support and build capacity for planning and analysis.

To receive transferred funds, the grant agent must have a Financial Procedures Agreement with the GPE Trustee – the World Bank. In case an agreement doesn't exist, the grant agent should initiate action to secure an agreement with expediency as soon as it has been selected.

II.7. Roles and responsibilities

Mutual accountabilities and basic functions

GPE aims to enhance dialogue and collaboration among all actors involved in education sector development and implementation. It works through existing coordination mechanisms, which it seeks to strengthen, and assigns roles and responsibilities through mutually agreed processes.

- **The GPE Charter** outlines the composition of all GPE key players and describe what they commit to when they sign up the GPE Compact in terms of mutual accountabilities.
- **The GPE Country-level Process Guide** summarizes the basic functions of all GPE key players in relation to country-level grant processes.

More information:

GPE Charter, see page iv

GPE Country-level Process Guide, see page iv.

For the ESPDG, the consultative process within the local education group is particularly critical to the development of the ESPDG application. The coordinating agency supports the government in ensuring that the consultative process is transparent and sufficient. The roles and responsibilities of

the various players vis-à-vis the ESPDG are summarized in the table below for mutual accountabilities, and further described in the step-by-step guidance (see III).

Roles and Responsibilities in relation to the ESPDG	
Developing country partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads on the development of the plan preparation process including the sector analysis. Collaborates with development partners to reach a consensual decision on grant agent selection and validates the final decision. Validates and submits the ESPDG application prepared by the grant agent. Develops the ESP or TEP, with support from development partners, including support from GPE / ESPDG. Contributes information to the final ESPDG completion report as required.
Development partners including civil society organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in technical discussions on how the ESPDG will support the ESP / TEP planning process, and ensures that decisions are made in a transparent way. Provide technical and financial support to the ESP / TEP development process.
Local education group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves as a consultative and advisory forum for the government for setting criteria for the ESPDG grant agent selection; validating the ESPDG proposal and generally supporting the sector analysis and ESP / TEP development, including discussion of the results of the independent appraisal of the draft ESP / TEP. Provides feedback to the Secretariat on the lessons learnt regarding the ESPDG.
Coordinating agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates the grant agent selection and ensures that the Secretariat is informed. Facilitates discussions around the ESPDG application and endorses it on behalf of the development partners prior to its submission by the Government. Facilitates and supports the sector analysis and ESP development. Distributes the ESPDG report and compiles feedback on lessons learned.
Grant agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops the ESPDG application in close collaboration with the government and the local education group. Administers the grant according to the approved application and the Financial Procedures Agreement with the GPE Trustee and the GPE policies and guidelines. Works closely with the government to ensure capacity building and ownership of the process, and with the local education group throughout the process. Keeps the Secretariat up to date on delays and challenges in implementation, and alert the Secretariat in the event of any misuse of funds. Prepares the grant completion report and submits it to the Secretariat.

Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that country level partners are informed of the expected process for the grant agent selection and supports the process. • Ensures that partners are informed of GPE funding requirements and quality assurance milestones so that they can be taken into account in the ESPDG planning. • Verifies that the application is complete, approves it through the CEO by delegated authority and notifies the GPE Fund Trustee to transfer funds. • Stays informed on progress through engagement in the ESP planning process. • Acknowledges receipt of the ESPDG completion report and processes it for its annual portfolio review by the Board.
--------------------	---

III. Grant application process

Before developing an ESPDG application, the coordinating agency should notify GPE of the government's intent to apply for the grant as well as the timing. Normally the ESPDG process will be included in the local education group work plan to pace and coordinate the development of a new or revised ESP / TEP.

Step 1: Identification of scope of work, activities, timeline, and selection of currency²

Given that the quality of the ESP/TEP correlates with the quality of its preparation, the plan development process should be carefully organized and coordinated. It should be government-led and participatory in a meaningful way, and take into consideration the capacity and system strengthening needs of the sector. For both the ESP and the TEP, a well-planned process will help make effective use of available resources and time.

GPE recommends to define the process through the preparation of a **concept note**, allowing the government team and partners to develop a common vision and outline scope and tasks. This should include criteria and timing for quality assurance checks and, for countries that intend to apply for an ESPIG, an independent assessment of the ESP / TEP (see IV.3). The specific technical assistance needed to support the process should be further scoped and outlined through the preparation and discussion of a terms of reference. All activities should be outlined in an **integrated roadmap**, which should include a budget that takes domestic and external funding into account to demonstrate that the GPE funding is *additional* and complements work supported by other sources.

Four elements form the basis for scoping and planning the ESP / TEP development process, as well as most of the elements for the ESPDG application.

² The option to select currency only applies to grants approved after January 1, 2019.

Four deliverables to scope the process and frame the ESPDG application:

1. A concept note defining how the education sector analysis, education plan development, and independent assessment will be approached and coordinated.
2. Terms of reference for the technical assistance needed to support the education sector analysis and education sector plan tasks.
3. An integrated roadmap reflecting a coherent set of activities to implement the tasks set in the concept note, together with sources of funding and a timeline.
4. A budget that details the costs of the activities for which GPE / ESPDG financing is requested, and which represents value for money.

Selection of currency: Applicants can elect to access the ESPDG grant in euro, in lieu of the dollar. The decision to apply in euro should be made by the GA in consultation with the government and the local education group. It has to be communicated to the GPE Secretariat (copying the CA). The conversion of the grant amount from the dollar to euro will be based on the prevailing exchange rate at the World Bank as of the date the Secretariat receives the official application.

Step 2: Development of the ESPDG application

While the government leads the planning of the ESP / TEP development process in close consultation with the in-country development partners, the grant agent has delegated responsibility for developing the ESPDG application based on the agreed process. The grant agent will work with the government and partners, possibly through the establishment of a steering committee, to ensure that the four above-mentioned deliverables are prepared in accordance with the agreed scope, technical decisions and complementary funding from the grant agent and other partners.

ESPDG application templates and guidance

The grant agent should use the ESPDG Application Form to provide general information, while the concept note and ToR should be prepared in a separate Word document based on the guiding questions provided in Annex 1 (Deliverable 1 & 2). The integrated roadmap with timeline and specific GPE / ESPDG budget should be prepared in the ESPDG Roadmap Template (Deliverable 3 & 4) – See page iv.

In case the local education group selects two different grant agents for the sector analysis and the ESP / TEP development activities, there can be two separate applications, which should then be adapted to their specific purposes. They can be submitted either together or at different times. For each case, the same ESPDG templates as those mentioned above should be used.

There is flexibility as to how to structure the concept note. It should define how the education sector analysis, education plan development, and independent assessment processes will be approached and coordinated. A possible outline could consist of: (i) background and rationale; (ii) scope of work; (iii) methodological approach (iv) modality of work; (v) ownership and dissemination plan; and (vi) staffing, timeframe, and budget.

Beyond the structure, it is expected that the concept note and related ESPDG application documents include the following aspects, which are further articulated in the guiding questions found in **Annex 3**:

- **Country background and context**
The concept note should define the purpose and scope of the ESP / TEP development process based on a review of the country's performance with respect to past education sector strategies and in relation to national development goals and Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Education sector analysis**
The concept note should identify existing gaps in sector analysis and how these will be filled, given that an ESP / TEP of good quality builds on evidence-based diagnosis of the existing education outcomes, delivery, and functionality.
- **ESP / TEP development process and technical assistance needs**
The concept note should outline the key steps of ESP / TEP development process, including consultations and the independent assessment. The terms of reference, annexed to the concept note, should specify the technical assistance requested to be financed through the ESPDG to support the education sector analysis, the ESP / TEP development process, and the independent assessment.
- **Integrated roadmap**
The concept note should describe the core of the roadmap developed by the country team and further detailed in the provided ESPDG Roadmap Template. The roadmap should reflect the scope of the process, the different phases covering both the education analysis and plan development, clear deliverables and domestic and external funding sources.
- **Quality assurance milestones**
The concept note should outline the agreed quality assurance mechanisms, which will help ensure that the draft ESP / TEP meet expected quality standards that are required for those countries that intent to apply for an ESPIG. These should include three milestones in the development process that are part of the GPE quality assurance for ESP / TEP development process, i.e. 1) development partners' initial comments on an early draft; 2) the independent assessment; and 3) the endorsement by in-country development partners (see **Annex 4**).
- **Context-specific risks**

The concept note should assess context-specific risks and how these may affect the fulfillment of the planned activities, and what can be done to address the identified and possible risks. These may relate to political commitment, adequacy and predictability of funding, time and capacity constraints, as well as contextual constraints including vulnerability to conflict and/or disaster risks.

Upon completion of the ESPDG application, the country team should have clarity on the processes, resources, and time needed to complete the sector analysis and the ESP / TEP. The ESPDG application should be discussed and approved by the local education group prior to its submission.

Step 3: Submission

The complete ESPDG application package consists of:

- The completed ESPDG Application Form
- The concept note including terms of reference in annex on technical assistance (completed in separate Word document)
- The roadmap for ESP /TEP development, including timeline and budget for the ESPDG (completed in ESPDG Excel template)

As well as:

- Minutes of the local education group meeting during which the application was endorsed.
- Minutes of the local education group meeting during which the ESPDG grant agent was nominated.

In case a current education plan is envisioned for review with ESPDG support, a copy of the current ESP or TEP should be submitted with the application. If the local education group wishes to submit any additional documents for consideration, these can be attached in the email when submitting the application.

ESPDG Submission

A ESPDG application can be submitted anytime throughout the calendar year. The government signs and submits the complete application together with the required deliverables to the Secretariat at the following address gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org copying the coordinating agency, the grant agent and the GPE country lead.

Step 4: Screening

Upon receipt of the application, the Secretariat will carry out an initial review. The Secretariat will have 10 working days to complete this screening and notify the coordinating agency, copying the designated Ministry focal point and the grant agent, in case there are any points needing clarification.

Critical aspects of the ESPDG application

- **Sector analyses:** Do the planned analytical activities, together with those financed by other partners provide a sufficient analytical grounding for the launch of the ESP or TEP development process?
- **Capacity development:** Does the application demonstrate how the proposed activities will lead to strengthening the national systems responsible for sector analysis and planning?
- **Partnership:** Are the activities to be financed fully part of a broader and coherent set of activities and does the application demonstrate evidence of a broad consensus around the proposed activities?
- **Quality assurance:** Does the roadmap clearly incorporate the three quality assurance milestones for ESP / TEP development?
- **Feasibility:** Does the timeline and seem appropriate and realistic for the activities outlined? Does the grant agent have the required capacities?
- **Budget:** Is the budget reasonable for the activities and for the grant agent costs? Is there a clear case presented for how costs will be managed to ensure value for money? To what extent will the ESPDG financing be *additional* and fill an existing gap?
- **Risk assessment:** Are there any risks to carrying out the activities outlined against the timeline, and if so, what mitigation measures are included?

In carrying out the initial review, the Secretariat will determine whether the grant application meets all requirements, whether there are any gaps in the expected deliverables for the application, and whether it includes a reasonable budget and timeframe. While this determination will vary according to each grant, in all cases, the Secretariat will assess to what extent the concept note and roadmap address the needs of the education system as identified by the local education group and emphasize GPE goals and priorities where appropriate.

In case the Secretariat has questions or concerns related to the content of the ESPDG application, it will be returned to the coordinating agency, copied to the grant agent and the designated ministry focal point, with written comments. The country team can then address the Secretariat's concerns and resubmit the application.

Step 5: Approval

After the initial screening, the Secretariat's grant application review committee, composed of a cross-team of technical, policy and financial experts, reviews the application making sure that the ESPDG grant process and budget are in line with the GPE guidelines, and makes recommendations to GPE's Chief Executive Officer for further allocation decision.

Where an application has failed to address concerns raised during the screening stage, or where the Secretariat's grant application review committee raises significant new concerns, the Secretariat may ask for additional clarifications. Should the Secretariat decide not to approve the ESPDG application, it will provide written comments outlining why the application was not approved.

Upon approval of the application, the Secretariat will notify the GPE Trustee to process a transfer of funds to the grant agent, where a Financial Procedures Agreement already exists. Where no Financial Procedures Agreement is pre-existing, the Secretariat will continue working with the grant agent to develop a Financial Procedures Agreement (*ToR for Grant Agents*, see page iv).

Timeframe for application processing and for the approved grant

If no clarifications are needed as a result of the screening, the application will be processed within 30 working days upon receipt, and the Secretariat's decision will be communicated to the coordinating agency with copy to the grant agent and the ministry focal point.

If approved, the letter from the Secretariat will indicate:

- 1) The starting date of the grant – the date of the letter or the date in the application, which comes later;
- 2) The closing date of the grant – as indicated in the application, and
- 3) The date by which a grant completion report is expected.

IV. Grant management and monitoring

IV.1. Grant administration

Minimum standards for grant administration

- **The Terms of reference for grant agents** set the general objectives and expectations for administering GPE grants. Agencies that are selected as grant agents meet certain minimum standards and are therefore entrusted to follow their own policies and procedures including those related to audit, eligible expenditures, employment and supervision of consultants and procurement, and fiduciary oversight including continued support and corrective action to ensure effective implementation.

More information:

ToR for Grant Agents, see page iv.

The grant agent is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the ESPDG. It works closely with the government within a government-led planning process, engages in policy dialogue, and provides technical support as needed, including support to enhancing the planning capacity of the government. The grant agent will use its own monitoring system, policies and procedures to ensure that high quality work is carried out in accordance with the approved application.

A key objective in monitoring the grant is to detect issues that may arise during implementation as early as possible and to resolve them. If there are delays or issues that may adversely affect the quality and timing of the work, it is the responsibility of the grant agent to inform the Secretariat and the local education group. In doing so, the grant agent should also include an explanation of what is being done or considered to mitigate the impact of delays and to ensure that the ESPDG will be completed in a timely manner.

In general, a key role of the grant agent is to work closely with the government to ensure full leadership and ownership of the ESPDG supported activities and to use the process to build government capacity. It is also key for the grant agent to work with coordinating agency to ensure that the local education group is consulted and regularly informed on the status of activities, including any delays in the roadmap.

IV.2. Revisions

The grant agent may make minor revisions to the grant activities provided the adjustments to the grant budget are limited - **less than 20% of the grant amount** - and are in line with the objectives of the ESPDG. The grant agent must inform the Secretariat of these adjustments as part of the grant completion report.

For revisions that affect the grant budget to a larger extent - **in excess of 20% of the grant amount** - the grant agent should first ensure that the local education group is aware of the change through notification of the coordinating agency, and then submit the request to the Secretariat documenting the rationale for the change and the amounts involved. The Secretariat will consider the change and either issue a non-objection to the proposed changes or will inform the grant agent if the changes are not acceptable.

Revisions that affect the grant agent country office costs require the Secretariat's approval, even though these are less than 20% of the grant amount.

Submission of revisions

The grant agent should submit requests for ESPDG revisions to the Secretariat using: gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org with copy to the coordinating agency, the ministry focal point and the GPE country lead.

If a country wishes to extend activities beyond the timeframe indicated in the original application, the grant agent should prepare a request in consultation with the local education group. **Extensions** will be limited to one 6-month extension unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

The Secretariat will consider the request and either issue a non-objection to the proposed changes or will inform the grant agent, if the changes are not acceptable. Should it decide not to approve the request, it will provide written comments outlining why it was not approved.

IV.3. Risks mitigation

As for all types of grants, GPE has a zero tolerance policy regarding misuse of GPE Trust Fund resources. In the event that it does occur, the grant agent's internal processes for dealing with such issues will apply, including procedures to reclaim any misused funds, if applicable. The grant agent should also immediately inform the Secretariat, in writing, of any concerns regarding misuse of funds and remedial actions taken by the grant agent to mitigate the impact on the program in line with the GPE Policy in this regard.

Zero tolerance policy

- **The Policy and Communications Protocol on Misuse of GPE Trust Funds** should be followed in the event of suspected misuse of funds, in addition to the grant agent's own internal procedures and processes in this regard.

More information:

Policy and Communications Protocol on Misuse of GPE Trust Funds, see page iv.

III.4. Completion

The endorsement letter, signed by development partners of the local education group and sent to the Government with copy to the Secretariat, marks the completion of the ESPDG³.

In case the grant is covering activities under Window 1 only, the final draft of the education sector analysis or targeted studies would mark the completion of the ESPDG. In that case the developing country partner can decide to apply for support under Window 2.

³ For countries that intend to apply for an ESPIG, the endorsed ESP / TEP needs to be shared with the Secretariat together with other documents (the ESP / TEP package), at least three months prior to an ESPIG application (see ESPIG guidelines).

III.5. Reporting

Grant agents are requested to provide an ESPDG completion report within six months after the grant closing date for accountability purposes and to assist the Secretariat in monitoring and knowledge-sharing. The report should include a description of all outputs related to the financial and technical execution of the ESPDG; explanation of any significant deviation from the original plan, and, if needed, an explanation for any incomplete deliverables.

The final financial statements should be submitted as stipulated in the Financial Procedures Agreement (usually within 6 months). Any unspent funds at the close of the grant should be reported to the Secretariat as part of the final completion report, and to the GPE's Trustee by an authorized signatory using the relevant annex outlined in the Financial Procedures Agreement. The Secretariat and the Trustee for the GPE Fund will liaise with the grant agent for further details on how the unspent funds will be returned.

Reporting template and submission

The grant agent should use the ESPDG Completion Report Template (see page iv), and send the completed report with all products supported by the ESPDG (Education Sector Analysis, ESP / TEP and any knowledge product) attached. The report should be sent within six months of the close of the grant to **gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org** with copy to the coordinating agency and the GPE country lead.

The coordinating agency will distribute the ESPDG report to the local education group; discuss and compile feedback on lessons learned as part of the wider sector dialogue, and share these with the Secretariat. The Secretariat will process the information received for the annual portfolio review by the Board and distill good practices for cross-country sharing as relevant, as part of its broader objective to support capacity development and the dissemination of knowledge to improve sector planning and policy implementation.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Quality standards for an ESP

Annex 2. Quality standards for a TEP

Annex 3. Guiding questions for the preparation of concept notes

Annex 4. Quality assurance milestones for the ESP / TEP development roadmaps

Annex 1

Quality standards for an ESP

To meet the quality standards as defined in the GPE/IIEP Education Plan Preparation Guidelines (p. 9), an ESP must be:

Guided by an overall vision:	The plan, for instance through a mission statement, indicates overall direction, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the government's development policy, the approach the government will follow to reach its goal, and (iii) the principles and values that will guide this approach.
Strategic	It identifies the strategies for achieving the vision, including the human, technical, and financial capacities required, and it sets priorities.
Holistic	An ESP covers all subsectors (early childhood education, primary, secondary, and higher education), and should also include non-formal education, as well as adult literacy. It recognizes the need for coherence among subsectors, with a specific attention to the levels attached to recognized education rights and compulsory schooling, and reflects awareness that education takes place throughout life. The learner is defined as the central beneficiary of the education system, with recognized rights and needs. In the case of TEPs, this criterion is slightly adjusted: it is expected that it paves the way for later developing credible and sector-wide plan.
Evidence-based	It starts from an education sector analysis providing data and assessments that form the information base on which strategies and programs are developed.
Achievable	An ESP / TEP is based on an analysis of the current trends and thoughtful hypotheses for overcoming financial, technical, and political constraints to effective implementation. It should provide a framework for budget and management decisions. It is also recognized that strong ownership by key stakeholders largely determines ESP feasibility.
Sensitive to the context	It includes an analysis of the vulnerabilities specific to a country. Vulnerabilities might for example include conflicts, disasters, and economic crises. An ESP / TEP must address preparedness, prevention, and risk mitigation in order to strengthen the resilience of the education system at all levels.
Attentive to disparities	A sector plan should recognize that, within a country, there may be significant gender differences between girls and boys and inequalities between groups of students in their participation in education and the quality of education they receive. These groups may be defined for instance by their location, their socio-economic or ethnic characteristics, or their abilities. A credible sector plan must identify and attend to gender considerations across the plan, including where gender disparities intersect with other sources of disparity, and address the specific needs and opportunities of different groups.
More information	See GPE/IIEP Education Sector Plan Preparation Guidelines

Annex 2

Quality standards for a TEP

To meet the quality standards as defined in GPE/IIEP Transitional Education Plan Guidelines (p. 6), a TEP must have be:

Shared	The plan is state-driven and developed through a participatory process, ensuring commitment of key ministries together with key actors of the education sector, including education partners and civil society, to support its implementation. It provides a framework of mutual accountability for the ministry of education and its civil society, development, and humanitarian partners.
Evidence-based	It addresses key challenges identified through an evidence-based analysis of the education system. In situations where a comprehensive education sector analysis is not practical due to limitations in data or the amount of time and capacity required for a thorough analysis, the best available data and evidence are used to identify immediate and longer-term needs and to examine the causes of the issues identified. Following this, responsive and viable shorter- or medium-term remediation strategies are developed.
Sensitive to the context and pay attention to disparities	<p>The plan includes an analysis of the vulnerabilities specific to the country. These might include consideration of the immediate and longer-term negative effects of conflicts, disasters, or political or economic crises on education, as well as the potential for the education system to exacerbate tensions and conflict through, for example, existing policies, curriculum, and textbook content or exclusion of marginalized groups. To reduce the risk that education might contribute to societal grievances, a TEP identifies and addresses existing disparities based on sex, age, race, color, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth.⁴ A TEP addresses prevention, preparedness, and crisis/disaster risk reduction and mitigation measures in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide for the safety and well-being of children, teachers, and administrators; • strengthen the resilience of the education system; • contribute to efforts to strengthen social cohesion and peacebuilding, in line with the principles of ‘do no harm’ and ‘leave no one behind’.

⁴ The list of ‘marginalized and vulnerable groups’ as described in the Education 2030 agenda are not exhaustive, and countries and regions may identify and address other status-based vulnerability, marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion in education.

Strategic	<p>It identifies strategies that not only help address the education system’s immediate needs, but also build the foundation for realizing the system’s long-term vision. The TEP presents arguments for the choice of these strategies; the direction it offers guides national authorities and its partners. It therefore helps avoid the type of ad hoc, uncoordinated action that may prevail in situations where significant amounts of project-based support occur outside the government’s education plan.</p>
Targeted	<p>The plan focuses on critical education needs in the short and medium terms, and on system capacity development, including the preparation of the next ESP. It focuses on a limited number of policy priorities most likely to drive effective results over the planned period, taking into account the scarcity of the resources available and the capacity/contextual constraints. As such, the TEP may not cover the full education sector. It is an intermediate document and tool within a progressive approach to education sector development.</p>
Operational	<p>The TEP is a feasible, multi-year plan that includes well-argued implementation and financial hypotheses not only for meeting agreed-upon priorities but also for system development and strategies to overcome financial, data, technical, and political constraints. It provides a detailed framework for implementing programs, regularly monitoring progress achieved and corresponding expenditures, as well as assessing the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. It is a lively policy instrument that is monitored regularly and adapts to the changing environment in the course of its implementation. At a minimum, a TEP should be carefully costed, clearly identify implementation roles and responsibilities, and include an achievable results framework.</p>
<p>More information</p>	<p>See <i>GPE/IEP Transitional Education Plan Preparation Guidelines</i></p>

Annex 3

Guiding questions for the preparation of concept notes

The following outlines a series of questions to help guide the preparation of concept notes for education sector analysis and ESP / TEPs development

<p>Overall approach and country context</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on the current education policy planning cycle, reporting, monitoring and evaluation framework, and level of decentralization, what are the major processes and activities to be undertaken. 2. Based on the institutional framework, what are the overall roles and responsibilities for the activities that will need to be undertaken? What are the key points of interface? 3. How is the education sector process aligned with broader government-wide development strategy cycle? And how is the education policy planning cycle linked to the national budget cycle? How will the ESP / TEP process be informed or accordingly linked to this cycle? 4. How will the processes and products be controlled in terms of quality and timeliness? Outline the quality assurance mechanisms and specify which group or entity will oversee the sector planning process. 5. Describe the consultation process. In addition to the local education group, are consultations planned with broader education stakeholders including at the subnational and local levels?
<p>Education sector analysis and quality needs assessment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent is data available for decision-making? Is there a functioning Education Management Information System (EMIS) for collecting data and measuring progress? What other household data exists that may capture education sector data? 2. What thematic studies and program evaluations are available to inform the ESP / TEP strategy development or revision? How will the thematic strategies be informed by empirical evidence? If there are gaps in knowledge, for example gaps in understanding the causal links, what is the plan for filling those gaps? 3. Is there sufficient analytical grounding for the launch of the ESP / TEP development process? When was the last comprehensive sector analysis undertaken? 4. With regard to reducing inequality, is there sufficient analytical grounding to inform equity measures - particularly those aimed at reaching the most marginalized, including children with disabilities? 5. Is there recent analytical work on cost and efficiency in the sector to identify the primary internal inefficiency challenges?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Is there an established national assessment system for monitoring learning outcomes? 7. Are there gaps in analysis for which GPE support is requested? 8. Outline the extent to which the education sector analysis activities are geared toward strengthening government capacities. 9. How will the education sector analysis be disseminated to education stakeholders and feed into the policy dialogue process, in particular, the discussions around ESP / TEP development?
<p>ESP / TEP development process</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outline the process for determining the strategic priorities and their relevance to the country context. 2. Describe the responsibilities, roles and specific set-up for plan preparation (ESP / TEP and multi-year operational plans) well as the arrangements for technical work, quality oversight, political oversight, reporting lines, etc. 3. What mechanisms/processes will be employed to ensure that the priorities are informed by the education sector analysis? 4. Who will validate the relevance and coherence of the key strategies? Who is responsible for prioritizing activities and reflecting the main elements required for implementation in a medium-term costed action plan? Who will ensure that the sequencing of activities is logical and consistent? 5. Regarding multi-year operational plan, what will the process be for elaborating it? What process will be in place for prioritizing activities and reflecting the main elements required for implementation in a medium-term costed action plan as well as ensuring that the sequencing of activities is logical and consistent? 6. What is the process for devising financing options and determining whether they are realistic? 7. What is the process for discussing and agreeing upon the resources allocated to the sector, including with the Ministry of Finance? 8. In addition to the local education group, are consultations planned with broader education stakeholders including at the subnational and local levels? 9. Will external expertise (consultants) be required? Define the general areas and sequencing of work in the concept note and in detail, through a separate terms of reference.

Independent
assessment of the
ESPs/TEPs

The development and adoption of ESP or TEP is the responsibility of governments. The GPE supports the process by enhancing the quality of the ESPs through an independent assessment. Independent consultants, who are selected from an approved roster, will follow a standard methodology which is based on the IIEP/GPE appraisal guidelines.

1. Prior to undertaking the independent assessment, is a first check planned to verify the key features that are considered to be critical elements of the ESP / TEP?
2. How will the independent assessment inform the financing decisions of the GPE and other donors?

Annex 4

Quality assurance milestones for the ESP / TEP development roadmaps

The following outlines three quality assurance milestones to support the development of the ESP / TEP. For countries that intend to apply for an ESPIG, these quality assurance milestones help ensure that the plan meets expected quality standards, and should therefore be integrated into the ESP / TEP development roadmap.

<p>1 Initial comments on an early draft</p>	<p>Feedback from development partners on an early draft is strategically important as suggestions can be considered early and collectively in the ESP / TEP development process.</p> <p>The members of the local education group determine when an early draft is sufficiently ready to solicit initial comments from development partners, including the Secretariat. The Secretariat's initial comments will essentially focus on providing qualitative inputs on the draft against the expected quality standards for ESP's or TEPs (see Annex 1 and 2).</p>
<p>2 Independent assessment of draft education plan and follow up on its recommendations</p>	<p>The <u>independent assessment</u> of the ESP / TEP is a mandatory step for ESPIG applications. It is essential for in-country development partners' subsequent endorsements, and for GPE to obtain sufficient assurance of the soundness of the ESP / TEP as a basis for any significant financial investment in the plan.</p> <p>It is commissioned by the in-country development partners who select certified reviewers from a roster of experts, trained in the mandatory methodology for assessing ESP / TEPs. Before engaging the reviewers, the local education group makes a 'readiness' check based on a standard checklist to verify that the draft is ready for the assessment (see <i>GPE/IIEP Appraisal Guidelines</i>).</p> <p>The <u>appraisal report</u>, prepared by the independent reviewers should have clear recommendations on key areas of improvement in the ESP / TEP. It is reviewed and discussed by the local education group, to agree on improvements required in the short term (prior to endorsement) and, if needed, during plan implementation. Areas for immediate improvement must be addressed before the ESP / TEP can be considered finalized.</p> <p>The appraisal report is also shared with the Secretariat by the coordinating agency for a compliance check to verify that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appraisal process has been independent (based on criteria relating to level of transparency, procurement process, conflict of interest etc.) • The extent to which the evaluators complied with the GPE/IIEP appraisal guidelines.

	<p>The Secretariat will prepare a summary report with its findings. If major concerns are raised, the Secretariat may request a delay in the finalization of the plan in order for those concerns to be duly addressed.</p> <p>As a final step, the Government prepares an appraisal memo, which provides a summary on how the recommendations were addressed in the final version of the ESP, and how other recommendations will be addressed and monitored during implementation, if they cannot be addressed immediately.</p>
<p>Endorsement by 3 development partners</p>	<p>The endorsement of the ESP / TEP happens after the Government – the primary owner and implementer - has adopted it as its national strategy for education. Each agency decides whether it will endorse the plan and sign the collective endorsement letter.</p> <p>With the endorsement letter, the in-country development partners declare that they find the plan ‘<i>credible</i>’, and that they are committed to providing their technical and/or and financial support within this framework.</p> <p>The endorsement letter includes a rationale explaining why the ESP or TEP is considered ‘<i>credible</i>’. It is good practice to summarize the conclusions and recommendations of the appraisal report and the appraisal report memo, and how the plan meets the expected quality standards. It may articulate the assumptions upon which the development partners sign the endorsement, including issues that need to be addressed during implementation of the plan.</p>