GUIDELINES

SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION GRANT

November 2023

GPE Transforming Education

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QUICK START

What is this document?

This is both an introduction to GPE's **system transformation grant** and a guide to completing and submitting the grant **application.**

Who is eligible and for how much?

Grant ceilings (or allocations) for eligible partner countries are available at the **GPE web site**. Countries applying for a **system transformation grant** will already have a **partnership compact** that sets out a priority reform that the grant will support.

Eligible partner countries can maximize GPE support by applying for the **GPE Multiplier** and **Girls' Education Accelerator** alongside the system transformation grant, using the same application.

What do I need to do?

Complete the grant application as appropriate for the grant or combination of grants required, including information as to the selection of grant agent, funding modalities, safeguards and program details.

GPE has a three-step **quality assurance review** process that provides feedback on: **1) program outline**, **2) a draft program document** and **3) the final application package**. All three steps apply to grants totaling US$50 million or more while grants above $10 million but less than $50 million omit the second step. Grants less than $10 million also follow steps 1 and 3 if they include a Girls' Education Accelerator. Countries seeking up to $10 million are reviewed on step three alone.

What do I provide?

1. **Grant application** (relevant sections)
2. **Budget** applying to the activities to be funded
3. **Program document** or **outline** (depending on total grant size)
4. **Minutes of the local education group meeting** that endorsed the application

What's next?

The application process begins with **selection of a grant agent** through a **consultative process** comprising the government, the GPE country team, a coordinating agency and the local education group.

Transparency

GPE's transparency policy requires that all approved grant applications and other related documents are usually posted to the **country pages of GPE's web site**.

INTRODUCTION

The system transformation grant offers partner countries the ability to make **focused, evidence-based investments** in programs that **remove systemic barriers and drive systemwide change**. The grant supports implementation of a priority reform that a country has agreed with its partners and set out in its **partnership compact.**

These guidelines describe how the system transformation grant fits within GPE's approach to supporting partner countries in ensuring more girls and boys receive a quality education. They explain the grant's main features, including how it can combine with other GPE grants, and provide **step-by-step guidance for applying**.

The GPE Approach

The **GPE operating model** is based on three stages of education system transformation that support countries in moving from assessment and diagnosis to prioritization and alignment, and finally to implementation, learning and adapting.

Step 1: Assess and diagnose: Partners in the local education group review policy frameworks as well as sector performance, needs and existing evidence to identify critical obstacles and a priority reform with the potential to drive system transformation. The review also includes an analysis of a country's performance under four **enabling factors** that are critical to catalyzing transformation:

- Data and evidence
- Sector coordination
- Gender-responsive planning
- Volume, equity and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education

Step 2: Prioritize and align: With its partners, the country prepares a **partnership compact** to align stakeholders and resources behind a prioritized reform area. The compact is a key strategic tool to drive system transformation through its focus on sector impediments and transformative solutions to address them. It allows each country to adapt the GPE model to its particular context, defines GPE's engagement and ensures that partner financing is complementary and harmonized.

Step 3: Act on evidence, learn and adapt. The country and its partners implement the agreed programs and reforms, with **gender** at the forefront throughout the process. These efforts are reinforced by improved access to data and close tracking of agreed results. This in turns increases accountability and allows evidence-based course correction.

THE GPE GRANT PROCESS

GPE GRANT ALLOCATION



Ceilings are set for:

- ✓ **System capacity grant**
- ✓ **GPE Multiplier**
- ✓ **Girls' Education Accelerator**
- ✓ **System transformation grant**

ASSESS, DIAGNOSE & PRIORITIZE



Identify paths and barriers through:

- ✓ **Enabling factors** analysis
- ✓ **Independent Technical Advisory Panel** assessment
- ✓ **Partnership compact** complete or underway

MULTIPLIER ONLY

CONFIRM GRANT AMOUNT



File expression of interest to show:

- ✓ **New, additional third-party funding**
- ✓ **Cofinancing modality**
- ✓ **Debt sustainability**
- ✓ **Focus areas** of proposed activities

SUBMIT APPLICATION



Application explains:

- ✓ **Program goals** and **milestones**
- ✓ **Financing costs**
- ✓ **Disbursement plans**
- ✓ **Risks**
- ✓ **Safeguards**



DECISION

About this Grant

The **system transformation grant** supports partner countries in realizing a priority reform with the potential for transformative change across an education system. The partner country, working with the local education group, selects the priority reform that serves as the basis for its partnership compact.

Partner countries use the application to briefly explain how the system transformation grant will benefit those children **most at risk of going without an education or having access only to poor quality learning**.

GPE also encourages **eligible** countries to maximize the resources available to them by applying for a **GPE Multiplier** and, if applicable, a **Girls' Education Accelerator** at the same time that they apply for a system transformation grant. The application offers optional sections for those grants and separate guidelines are available online.

Eligibility

A partner country must have a **partnership compact** endorsed by the local education group that sets out a priority reform to be supported by the system transformation grant. Allocation ceilings for each GPE grant are available at the **GPE web site**.

How to Use the System Transformation Grant

The system transformation grant supports the partner country in removing barriers in the **priority reform area** identified in the partnership compact (see box 1). Additionally, spending should be related to the education subsectors supported by GPE 2025: **pre-primary, primary, secondary, second-chance learning and gender inequalities** within the priority reform area.

Box 1. Education priorities supported by GPE grants

GPE financing focuses on improving learning, equity and inclusion for the most marginalized children including girls, children affected by crises and displacement, and those with disabilities. GPE prioritizes at least 1 year of preprimary education and 12 years of education and training, encompassing primary and lower-secondary education and second-chance learning. For details, see the GPE 2025 Strategic Plan.

If the grant is used as part of a sector-wide support mechanism, GPE resources are to be aligned with other external financing; for example, through a pooled fund or other sector-wide mechanism that strengthens government systems. In this case, it is important to provide assurances that the **implementation challenges** in the priority reform are **adequately financed** and that progress will be monitored.

Applicants also seeking the Girls' Education Accelerator grant must identify specific interventions aligned with their partnership compact that address **learning barriers for girls**, including challenges in related sectors (such as health or social protection) if these are impacting girls' education.

Results-based Financing

Well-designed results-based financing can **incentivize change** while emphasizing **accountability** across program development and implementation. A focus on results over expenditures also encourages greater funding **alignment** with national systems.

GPE recognizes that successful results-based financing often requires additional work and specific expertise during program design, especially in the areas of indicator selection, development of disbursement rules and means of verification.

Accordingly, GPE recommends that programs include **results-based financing** elements that are aligned with grant agent procedures and asks that applying countries briefly **outline** these in the application or **explain their absence**.

Duration

System transformation grants and GPE Multipliers usually have a duration of **4 years.** If cofinancing a program of longer duration, GPE grants should be linked to the first 4 years of implementation.

The expected **start date** and **implementation period** should be indicated in the "Overview" section of the grant application. The program should begin as soon as possible following grant approval and **no later than 6 months after**. Any request for a later start date requires detailed justification.

The grant agent must notify the GPE Secretariat once the program has begun. Commencement is usually signified by an initiating event (e.g., signing of the grant agreement), as described in the grant application.

Grant agents are encouraged to consider any **potential delays** when determining a start date, particularly in instances when the expected program start date depends on successful negotiation of a grant agreement with the government and subsequent signing and approval by both parties.

Delayed start dates will **not automatically extend the grant's closing date.** Any delay to the expected start date, the signing of the grant agreement (if applicable) or the grant closing date must comply with the GPE grant policy, which states that permission to delay implementation **must** be requested from the Secretariat.

Grant prioritization

GPE grants should either be **prioritized or in proportion** with other sources of cofinancing, including those from the grant agent. If the utilization of GPE grants cannot be prioritized, an exception should be requested in the application form. A request for grant extension may not be approved if other sources of funding have been prioritized without prior agreement.

Applying

Table 1 offers an overview of the path to approval of a system transformation grant. Before developing an application, the government or coordinating agency should notify the Secretariat of its intention to apply, as well as the likely timing.

Table 1. System transformation grant application stages

Total application amount	Grant agent selection, funding modality	Develop program outline	Initial quality assurance review	Full quality assurance review	Develop & submit application	GPE application review	Decision (GPE CEO or Board)
Up to $10M		→	→	→			
Above $10M (or below $10M + Girls' Education Accelerator)				→			
$50M or more							

Given the applicant country is expected to have **already** developed a partnership compact and received GPE notification of an indicative allocation for its system transformation grant, these guidelines focus on **grant agent selection, funding modality,** the **program outline, quality assurance** and **final decision**.

THE APPLICATION

Countries can use a multipurpose **application** to seek a system transformation grant, as well as the **GPE Multiplier** and the **Girls' Education Accelerator**. The overall application process for a system transformation grant will likely require around **7 months**, beginning with grant agent selection (including the initial and full quality assurance reviews), submission, final review and decision.

If applying **only** for a **system transformation grant**, you will be asked to complete the following sections:

- Overview
- System Transformation Grant
- Partnership Compact
- Program
- Aid Effectiveness
- Results-based Financing
- Grant Agents and Costs
- Safeguards Against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
- Application Development
- Signatures

To complete the application **submission**, you are asked to also attach:

1. A **spreadsheet** outlining the **budget** for the activities to be funded
2. A **program document** or **outline**, depending on application amount
3. **Minutes** of the local education group meeting endorsing the application

Overview

The overview summarizes significant elements of the application, including the grant amount requested, results-based financing, grant agent and fees, other sources of funding for activities that will be supported by the system transformation grant and the grant agents, and key dates.

Applicants can **elect to receive the grant in euros**. This decision should be made by the grant agent in consultation with the government and the local education group and **communicated to the Secretariat** (copying the coordinating agency) **before** submitting the grant application. The conversion of the grant amount from dollars to euros will be based on the prevailing exchange rate at the World Bank as of the date the Secretariat receives the request to access the grant in euros.

GPE Multiplier

In this section of the application, partner countries choosing to **also apply for a GPE Multiplier** with a system transformation grant are asked to briefly specify the **cofinancing partner, amount and type of instrument** for each cofinancing contribution that secures their access to the Multiplier.

This section also summarizes the new and additional cofinancing (already provided in greater detail in the **expression of interest** for the Multiplier). Countries should briefly explain **if** cofinancing amounts **vary** from those in their expression interest.

Girls' Education Accelerator

The application also offers eligible partner countries the option of applying for a **Girls' Education Accelerator**, which provides supplemental funding that ideally should be accessed **in combination with one or both of the system transformation grant** and **GPE Multiplier**.

Girls' Education Accelerator funding is not guaranteed for all Accelerator-eligible countries as it is contingent on the partnership compact clearly stating **how** these resources will complement gender initiatives to accelerate **results for girls**. GPE expects that the subsequent grant design will provide greater detail on use of the grant, which will be assessed as part of GPE's quality assurance.

The amount sought through the Girls' Education Accelerator is specified in the overview in the application. Section 4 of the **application** for the Girls' Education Accelerator asks countries that are combining it with the system transformation grant to provide the location in the relevant program document that specify the interventions that tackle key barriers to advancing girls' education.

If the program document requests dedicated funding via the Girls' Education Accelerator, countries specify in the application the target outcomes under **at least one of a set of core indicators** (table 2) that will be used in the results framework.

Table 2. Core indicators for the Girls' Education Accelerator

Access	Girls' enrollment rate (net or gross) improved in supported schools/areas
	Number of girls benefiting from monetary and nonmonetary incentives to enroll in/stay in school (e.g., conditional cash transfers, stipends, fee waivers, unconditional cash transfers, school meal programs, uniforms, an increased supply of education, etc.)
	Number of schools where gender-responsive education facilities and infrastructure (e.g., separate latrines, boarding schools) have been developed or rehabilitated

Learning	Improvement in the number of girls meeting minimum proficiency levels in reading and/or mathematics, or the number of girls demonstrating adequate progress in academic and/or vocational skills in supported schools/areas
	Number of girls supported through direct interventions to enhance learning in supported schools/areas
Gender Equality	Number of schools that implement strategies, policies, or programs to retain or reintegrate pregnant girls or teenage mothers in schools as a result of the program
	Number of schools that provided life skills–based HIV and sexuality education as a result of the program (based on Sustainable Development Goal 4 indicator)
	Number of beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex and type) benefiting from programs that intend to prevent school-related gender-based violence
	Number of beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex and type) benefiting from programs that intend to prevent early marriage and/or early pregnancy
	Number of beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex and type) benefiting from programs that intend to change attitudes or behaviors harmful to girls' education (harmful social norms)

Partnership Compact

This section asks the applicant to confirm that it has a partnership compact. Given that a system transformation grant is designed to support a priority reform identified in the compact, it is expected that **most applicants will have already completed this stage**. The compact also identifies key education system obstacles, including **gender inequalities**, and mobilizes partners at the country level to make strategic choices to address them; this includes how the system transformation grant, the Multiplier grant and the Girls' Education Accelerator might support the priority reform, alongside domestic and external financing.

The compact in determining access to a grant's indicative allocation

The GPE Board relies on the compact as background information in considering the **strategic focus** of the system transformation grant, as well as **how much** of the **indicative allocation** a country can access and the specific **triggers (if any)** governing that access. The Board decides whether a portion of the indicative allocation (called the **"top-up"** portion) will be provided based on the achievement of certain **agreed milestones**. In this case, it is the partner country's choice whether to apply for the full allocation upfront, including the top-up portion, or to initially apply only for that amount not triggered by the top-up milestones.

Partner countries **send a request** for the top-up funds (upon reaching the assigned milestones) for GPE Board review. The top-up amounts are released at the mid-term review of the partnership compact.

If the government opts to ask for the **full amount of the indicative allocation**, it will need to explain the **potential adjustments** that will be made to the program if it falls short of the agreed triggers, leading to withholding of the top-up allocation.

Program

Components and objectives

This section of the application asks for brief details on program components and objectives, beneficiaries, financing from other sources, key outputs, commencement dates, and how the program will contribute to **system transformation, gender equality** and **disability inclusion.**

Education providers

The applicant is also asked whether grant resources will be used to support non-state education providers, including for-profit schools.

No GPE funds can be used to support **for-profit provision of core education services**, including by either wholly or partially owned network or "chain" schools. Where GPE funding is used to support not-for-profit nonstate providers of core education services, partner countries should either have **regulatory frameworks** in place or under development. If they do not, and where there is no existing financing to develop it, some GPE funds should be used to help establish the regulatory framework.

Exemptions from this restriction may be granted to allow for bottom-up, community-derived networks and sole proprietor-owned schools that do not pay dividends. Such exemptions can only be considered as a last resort where there is no available public provision of core education services for marginalized populations and no alternatively available not-for-profit provision. For further details, see the GPE private sector engagement strategy and related exemptions.

Any request for an exemption**,** endorsed by the local education group, should be submitted to the Secretariat by the partner country during the communication of the program outline, at the latest. An emailed request should be sent to gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org, copying the grant agent (if already selected), coordinating agency and GPE country team lead.

Prioritizing children with disabilities

GPE partner countries increasingly prioritize education for children with disabilities in education policy and planning.

Regardless of the agreed priority reform, the grant application asks whether all planned components are inclusive of children with disabilities. This will be assessed as part of the quality assurance process.

For some activities, it might not be relevant to consider disability inclusion. Where this is the case, grant agents will be asked to provide a brief rationale within the grant application, in consultation with the government and local education group. This rationale should set out **why** disability inclusion is **not relevant** to a particular activity. As part of the design process, partners could reflect on government policy and any global commitments on inclusion made by the government or its grant agent.

Program outline

For grants **greater than $10 million**, the grant agent prepares a **written outline** of the program to be funded, based on the focus area identified in the partnership compact. A **key platform in the application process**, this program outline should demonstrate an effective use of diagnostics and the targeted deployment of resources to remove key obstacles to education delivery.

The program outline is expected to include (a) its **objectives,** (b) proposed **components** and high-level interventions that mainstream **gender**, (c) **key results and indicators**, and (d) an overview of **implementation arrangements**, as well as the choice of **currency** (if opting for disbursement in euros). The outline should contain a **theory of change or results chain** grounded in experience and evidence (plus root cause analysis) and linked to an indicative budget. This budget should include program subcomponents and estimated grant agent implementation support costs.

The program outline should be completed within **2 months** of the **selection** of the grant agent. This outline is shared with the local education group (which should have at least 10 business days to provide feedback) and then shared with the GPE Secretariat. The Secretariat will only provide feedback on the program outline after the government and grant agent have fully consulted the local education group.

Program development

Either as part of the grant agent selection or immediately after having been selected, the grant agent prepares a **program development timeline.** Grant agents may seek a **program development grant** to support this stage and the application process. The program development timeline needs to be in line with the schedule set out at the grant agent selection stage.

Once the grant agent has been selected, the timeline needs to be confirmed with the government and discussed with the Secretariat to streamline the **quality assurance reviews**, which are summarized below.

The grant agent shares the timeline with the local education group to ensure continued collaborative decision making and the timeline itself should specify future consultations. In this sense, "consultation" differs from "endorsement" (box 2), as it is not limited to submitting a document to the local education group for their approval.

The program development timeline is expected to be established within 4 weeks of grant agent selection. Changes to the timeline will need to be communicated immediately to the local education group and the Secretariat.

Box 2. Defining "endorse" in GPE processes

The term "endorse" in all GPE documentation means to offer **public support**. It should not be taken to imply **formal** approval or decision-making.

Quality assurance reviews

To assist country partners and grant agents in the application process, GPE performs quality assurance checks to ensure program design is in line with the aims set out in the partnership compact and that proposed activities comply with its policies. To streamline the process, **quality assurance reviews expand in scope** depending on the size of the system transformation grant sought.

Before the initial meeting on the program development timeline, GPE will provide the grant agent with a **quality assurance standards checklist**. Together with the government, the grant agent can then check compliance with GPE standards. The options of quality assurance support should be considered during this initial meeting and the request for the appropriate level of support from the Secretariat made in later stages.

The quality assurance review options

For any program to be financed by GPE with a combined grant amount **up to $10 million**, it can be agreed that **no program outline** will be submitted, in which case GPE conducts a quality assurance review when the application is submitted. For grants **above $10 million or grants less than $10 million when sought with a Girls' Education Accelerator,** the **program outline** will need to be submitted for an initial quality assurance review, while those for **$50 million** or more will proceed to a **full review** of the draft **program document** and **grant application**.

A full quality assurance review will also be expected for **regional applications**, as well as other **highly complex** or **innovative approaches**. Partner countries are encouraged to discuss whether they would benefit from additional quality assurance support, particularly in the areas of budget and grant agent costs, monitoring, fiduciary arrangements and elements related to results-based financing (e.g., specifics on milestones or targets and their verification arrangements).

Initial review (2—3 weeks)

The Secretariat's initial quality assurance review assesses the program outline to facilitate a robust and relevant program design for the grant that fully complies with relevant GPE policies. The Secretariat considers how the program aligns with the focus areas and activities outlined in the partnership compact and applies **three program quality standards:**

- Program design
- Sustainability
- Aid effectiveness

The Secretariat shares a quality assurance review **report** with the grant agent, partner country government and coordinating agency. Recommendations should be discussed within the local education group and considered in the finalization of the grant application package.

Full quality assurance review (3 weeks)

For grants of $50 million or more, the grant agent shares the **draft program document and application form** with the Secretariat for full review. In addition to the three quality standards criteria applied in the initial review, the Secretariat also considers:

- Program budget
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Implementation arrangements and readiness
- Risk identification and mitigation

The review also examines whether the program design has given adequate consideration to the GPE policy on sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Finally, the Secretariat considers how the country and grant agent **resolved any issues identified in the initial quality assurance review** and then shares its findings in a report shared with them and the coordinating agency. As with the initial review, it is expected that any recommendations will be discussed within the local education group and accommodated in finalizing the grant application.

Aid Effectiveness

Funding modality

Based on the analysis of the enabling factors, and as part of the development of the partnership compact, the government and its partners identify the **best-aligned modality available** to channel the grants, as well as opportunities that could be available for further alignment or harmonization. It should be noted that this consideration can influence **grant agent selection**, as the agent must be able to use the selected modality.

If the assessment shows weaknesses with regard to alignment and a better option would not be available for current system transformation grants, the country could use the GPE **system capacity grant** to develop a solution. In addition, the GPE system capacity grant can also be used to develop or reinforce a pooled funding mechanism.

Results-based Financing

GPE strongly encourages countries to include **results-based financing components within GPE grants**. In this part of the application, the partner country is asked to describe these components or explain its decision against including them.

Grant Agents

Partner countries receive GPE funding through grant agents who are accountable for the use of the resources throughout the grant's duration. Governments, in consultation with the local education group, are encouraged to select a grant agent who can best assist them in a particular area supported by each GPE grant.

A country would normally select **one grant agent for system transformation grants**. Decisions to have more than one grant agent or to divide the grants between different entities are possible but should be justified. Where more than one grant agent is used, GPE will provide direct grants to each grant agent, but coordination arrangements between the entities should be clearly described in the proposal, including any **interdependencies** that may impact implementation.

Selection process

GPE is committed to diversifying the number of grant agents in support of partner countries through an **open and transparent selection process**. After defining the preferred funding modality for the system transformation grant, the government, in consultation with the coordinating agency (if the latter is not a candidate), will set out the grant agent selection criteria and create a selection committee.

The criteria need to include (a) the ability to use the most aligned funding modality available and appropriate in the context, (b) the capacity to support efficient implementation of the program within the focus area defined in the partnership compact, (c) the capacity for technical expertise in gender equality and education, (d) the ability to help the government to develop a program within 6 months of selection and (e) the administrative cost of program delivery.

Interested agencies should be asked to **draft a program development timeline as part of their candidacy**. Subsequently, the government will request members of the local education group to express their interest. This should be announced at a meeting of the local education group and accompanied by a written communication to group members, providing sufficient time for interested partners to submit requested information.

Any selection of a grant agent prior to this public call for interest will **not** be considered as final by GPE. The only **exception** is when an agency **conditions** its cofinancing of the Multiplier grant on the use of a specific grant agent to develop the joint program. However, even in that case the government will still need to organize a separate grant agent selection process for the regular system transformation grant after the partnership compact process.

Candidates should be asked to present their **expressions of interest** to the government and the selection committee, responding to the defined criteria. Based on expressions of interest, the selection committee should propose a grant agent for decision by the government. This decision should be presented for **endorsement** by the local education group (see box 2, above), preferably by consensus. If one or more development partners raise concerns with the process, recourse can be made to GPE's Conflict Resolution Procedures.

Minutes of the local education group meeting endorsing grant agent selection **should be sent to the GPE Secretariat.**

Grant agent responsibilities

To receive transferred funds, the grant agent must have **a financial procedures agreement with the GPE trustee (the World Bank).** If such an agreement does not exist, the designated agency should immediately seek to secure one after selection.

The terms of reference for grant agents set the general objectives and expectations for administering a system transformation grant. Agencies that are selected as grant agents meet certain minimum standards and are entrusted to follow their own policies and procedures including those related to audit, eligible expenditures, procurement, employment and supervision of consultants, and fiduciary oversight, including continued support and corrective actions during implementation.

While the government leads the planning process in close consultation with in-country development partners, the grant agent has the delegated **responsibility for developing the grant application** based on the agreed process.

The grant agent will work with the government and its partners to ensure that all deliverables are prepared in accordance with the agreed scope, technical decisions and complementary funding from the grant agent and other partners.

The grant agent will also provide **gender and education technical support**, ensuring that gender equality is considered in developing the grant program with the government.

The grant agent is responsible for ensuring that high-quality work is carried out in accordance with (1) applicable GPE policies and guidelines, (2) the grant application approved by GPE, (3) its own policies and procedures and (4) the financial procedures agreement. The government leads the grant application process in close collaboration with the grant agent who engages in policy dialogue and provides technical support.

The grant agent is expected to work closely with the government to ensure full leadership and ownership of the system transformation grant-supported activities. It is also important for the grant agent to work with the coordinating agency to ensure that the local education group is consulted and regularly informed on the status of activities, including any implementation delays. In addition, **the grant agent is expected 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 ensure that the grant activities will be completed in a timely manner.

The grant agent is asked to jointly develop and distribute **communication materials for nontechnical audiences**, such as press releases, photo and video packages and beneficiary profiles. Communications materials including but not limited to press releases, web stories, reports, photos and videos about the grant program will clearly reference GPE funding and comply with GPE branding guidelines.

To **promote understanding and support of education reforms**, the grant agent commits to facilitating an introduction of relevant counterparts to GPE's communications team with the aim of jointly promoting the grant. The grant agent should also help identify any stories of impact of the GPE program on beneficiaries that could be shared for media and publicity purposes. These stories will be featured on GPE communications materials and platforms, with attribution to the provider.

Safeguards and Obligations

Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment

GPE aims to ensure that there are adequate safeguards against **sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment and related misconduct** (SEAH) during implementation of programs funded by its resources. While grant agents are expected to follow their own SEAH policies and procedures, the grant application will ask for confirmation that:

1. The grant agent has considered SEAH risks that are induced or exacerbated by the GPE grant
2. If SEAH risks are identified, then details of risk assessment and proposed mitigation measures are provided
3. If SEAH risks are not relevant for the GPE grant, then reasons for this conclusion are provided.

When an SEAH incident occurs in the implementation of a GPE-funded program, the grant agent is required to **immediately notify the GPE country team lead**, copying: gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org

Misuse of GPE resources

GPE has a zero-tolerance policy regarding the misuse of its resources. In the event that it does occur, the grant agent's internal processes for dealing with such issues will apply, including steps 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.** It should also explain the remedial actions it is taking to mitigate the impact on the program, and ensure that these actions conform with the GPE Policy and Communications Protocol on Misuse of GPE Trust Funds and the applicable provisions of the Financial Procedures Agreement.

System transformation grants must be audited annually, and grant applications should include a provision for **yearly independent audits**. Audit reports and other notifications should be sent to the Secretariat country team lead, copying gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org

The right to education

Countries and their grant agents should also note that GPE is guided by **five key obligations on states to ensure the right to education**, and **all GPE partners** are bound by these obligations:

1. Providing 12 years of free, quality, public primary and secondary education – of which at least 9 years are compulsory – and at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education
2. Ensuring the right of access to public educational institutions and programs on a non-discriminatory basis
3. Ensuring that education conforms to the aims of education recognized in human rights treaties and is directed to the full development of human personality and sense of dignity

4. Respecting the liberty of parents to choose for their children schools, other than those established by public authorities, which conform to minimum educational standards
5. Using maximum available resources, including both domestic and international resources, to facilitate the progressive realization of the right to education, and without retrogression

Submission

The complete system transformation grant application package consists of:

- **Grant application** (relevant sections)
- **Budget** applying to the activities to be funded
- **Program document** and/or **outline** (depending on total grant size)
- **Minutes of the local education group meeting** that endorsed the application

If the local education group wishes to submit any additional documents for consideration, these can be attached to the email when submitting the application.

The government and grant agent should validate the completed application, which should also be **endorsed** by the local education group. The coordinating agency works with the government and grant agent to identify individuals who need to be copied on the submission in order to facilitate country-level processes.

The coordinating agency submits the completed and signed application, together with the required deliverables, to the GPE Secretariat at the following email address, copying the grant agent, local education group and the GPE country team lead:
gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org

The Approval Process

Final quality assurance review

Upon receiving the final application, the Secretariat verifies that the package is complete and proceeds with its final quality assurance check, using the system transformation grant quality standards that guided the initial and full reviews.

Should the Secretariat determine that the application does not meet these standards, it will inform the government, copying the coordinating agency and the grant agent. The government can decide on revisions to the application, with the possibility to retract and resubmit.

Grant decision

GPE's chief executive officer makes approval decisions on grant applications **up to a total of $10 million** before agency fees. This amount **includes** the system transformation grant, Multiplier and Girls' Education Accelerator. The CEO may refer the application to the Board for decision if it requires further deliberation.

Any application amount totaling more than $10 million will be recommended to the Board for ultimate review and decision. For all grants, the approving entity (either CEO or Board) will examine the findings of the final quality assurance review and decide whether the application represents a **good investment for GPE that would support education system transformation.**

The decision, together with the expected timeframe for commencement of program implementation, is communicated to the ministers of finance and of education **within 10 business days of approval**, copying the grant agent and the coordinating agency. The notification includes:

- Grant amount and duration
- Aspects of results-based financing, along with actions and indicators
- Designation of the grant agent

Revisions

The application package is considered an integral part of GPE's approval. Any changes to any of these documents after submission to GPE should follow GPE grant policy regarding revision. This includes any changes to the program documents during the grant agent's internal approval process.

The grant agent should submit requests for revisions to the Secretariat via email to gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org, copying the coordinating agency, the ministry focal point and the Secretariat country team lead.

Definition of revisions

A change or series of changes to indicators and targets, modification of program scope or design, additions or cancellations of program components or subcomponents, as compared to the original grant approval, are considered in table 3. Changes are considered cumulatively: a revision resulting in a reallocation of up to 20 percent of the grant amount is considered "minor", but a subsequent change will be considered as "non-minor".

The Secretariat also considers the revisions in any proposal collectively. That is, if **one** of the proposed revisions in the proposal is assessed as **material** when viewed against the initial grant approval, the **full proposal** is presented to the Board for decision, as the revisions are considered interconnected. For material revisions that require significant changes to strategic parameters, the Board will at the same time amend these to clarify when further revisions will require its approval.

The Board, in its approval of a proposed material revision that includes an extension, may determine that a subsequent request for an extension of a defined period of less than 24 months requires Board approval.

Table 3. Definitions of revisions
("target" refers to any target in the results framework and results-based financing)

Minor	Non-minor	Material
• Reallocation of up to 20% of the total grant amount from GPE, not exceeding $10 million • and/or a change of less than 20% of any target	• An extension of 24 months or less of the original grant closing date • and/or a reallocation that exceeds $10 million or above 20% of the total grant amount from GPE trust funds, whichever is lower (This also applies to reallocation between results-based indicators that exceeds $10 million or 20% of the total grant amount from GPE trust funds, whichever is lower) • and/or any changes in the results framework related to financing under GPE funding, with the exception of changes less than 20% of any targets and/or related to reallocations up to 20% of the total grant amount from GPE Trust Fund (with no impact beyond 20% of original targets) • and/or any changes in the implementation modality • and/or changes to variable part indicators and/or targets above 20%	• An extension of more than 24 months of the original grant closing date • and/or a program revision that requires a significant change to the strategic parameters

In considering **financial thresholds** for cases in which a country had requested to receive its allocation in Euros, the determination of whether a revision is minor, non-minor or material is based on the exchange rate used to convert the allocation on the day of the request.

Process and responsibility for program revisions

The grant agent and partner country government should **consult** the other members of the local education group and solicit their endorsement for any proposed non-minor or material revision. The grant agent should then provide a **written "program revision notification"** to the Secretariat prior to undertaking the non-minor or material revision. The program revision notification should include:

- the reasons, content and timeline for the proposed revision, as well as how the revision will impact program implementation
- a description of how the changes will affect the theory of change outlined in the application package
- documentation verifying the local education group's support of the proposed revision (e.g., meeting minutes or a letter from coordinating agency confirming the support of the local education group)

Minor revisions to the program should be reported no later than by the time of the next program implementation report.

The Board has delegated authority to the Secretariat to assess whether a program revision is non-minor or material, based on the program revision notification. In cases in which the grant allocation has been made in Euros, see **table 3** above to assess whether the proposed revision would be considered minor, non-minor or material.

The grant agent should only undertake the decision to implement a revision after following the relevant due process:

- **in case of a non-minor revision,** the grant agent must secure a non-objection from the Secretariat. In the event that the Secretariat objects to the revision, it may refer the matter, along with the rationale for the objection, back to the local education group for further discussion. The grant agent and the partner country government can, in consultation with the other members of the local education group, submit a revised program revision (endorsed by the local education group) to the Secretariat.

- **in case of a material change,** the Secretariat forwards the program revision notification to the Board, along with any other relevant documentation. If possible, the Board decides on a non-objection basis whether to approve the proposed revision.

The Secretariat notifies the partner country, the coordinating agency (on behalf of the local education group), and the grant agent of the Board's decision within 10 business days. In the event that the Board does not agree to a revision, the Board may refer the matter back to the local education group for further discussion, along with the rationale for the objection. After discussion, a revised program revision notification may be submitted, including endorsement by the local education group.

Reporting Requirements

Reporting on all GPE grants facilitates understanding and effectiveness by ensuring partners at the country level, as well as the Secretariat, are kept informed of all developments.

Update to local education group

The government and grant agent are expected to periodically share with the local education group **any policy-related issues** from the program implementation relative to supported areas.

Reporting on grant performance is expected to be learning-oriented and to seek further opportunities for improvement to achieve system transformation. It is also expected to be an assessment of ongoing coherence between the GPE grant and other actions taken to reinforce and transform the education system. The frequency and intensity of reporting will likely vary depending on country context, but updates to the local education group must be provided at least twice a year. As relevant, reporting should be integrated across joint sector reviews.

This country-level reporting will be useful for the local education group members in effectively identifying areas of grant implementation that will require reevaluation and realignment during the partnership compact **mid-term review**. Assessment conducted during the mid-term review could inform any revision of the grant.

Grant completion reports should be discussed within the local education group, helping it reflect on the overall successes and challenges of implementation. This also represents an opportunity to determine the extent to which the grant has contributed to addressing capacity weaknesses or obstacles, and how these lessons can be incorporated and guide future actions, including the next funding cycle.

Reporting to the GPE Secretariat

Semi-annual portfolio review meetings: The grant agent is required to hold semi-annual portfolio meetings with the Secretariat, keep the Secretariat regularly informed on performance of the grant, facilitate joint problem-solving and to ensure good flow of information and timely reporting by the Secretariat to the GPE Board. Those meetings can be organized as joint monitoring missions, which is recommended in case of shortcomings in grant performance that may limit or jeopardize the timely achievement of its contribution to system transformation.

Action plans to address underperforming grants: The Secretariat is entitled to request ad-hoc reports wherever it observes shortcomings in grant performance that might limit or jeopardize the timely achievement of its contribution to system transformation. This includes but is not limited to situations where the grant agent reports shortcomings in implementation progress or lower- or slower-than-expected fund utilization. The grant agent is required to report on the measures planned or taken to remedy those issues that have caused underperformance and the associated timeline to realize those improvements. To reduce transaction costs, the Secretariat will consult with the grant agent on the appropriate format of such reports, which could include aide-memoires from supervision missions.

Annual progress report: The grant agent should submit an annual progress report to the GPE Secretariat, describing progress, achievements and challenges under the grant. The Secretariat will advise if and when the grant agent can merge the progress report with the completion report for short grants and for the last year of program implementation. The first annual progress report covering the first 12 months of implementation must be submitted no later than **15 months** after the start date (i.e., 3 months after the first anniversary of the official grant start date). See **table 4** for a summary.

Subsequent progress reports must be submitted at least annually and no later than **3 months** after the anniversary date of the official grant start date. Any exceptions to this reporting calendar should be formally agreed with the GPE Secretariat. The grant agent must submit progress reports after consultation with the government and the local education group. Unless otherwise formally agreed between the grant agent and the GPE Secretariat, the progress report should include all relevant mandatory reporting items as indicated in the GPE's standard reporting template and should be submitted through GPE's online reporting portal.

Completion reports: After consulting with the government and local education group, the grant agent submits a completion report within **6 months of grant closing** to outline overall performance and results of the grant and lessons learned from grant implementation. As with progress reports and unless otherwise formally agreed between the grant agent and GPE Secretariat, the completion report should include all relevant mandatory reporting items as indicated in GPE's standard reporting templates and be submitted through the online reporting portal.

Projections and reporting of funds use: The grant agent provides the Secretariat an annual projection of how remaining funds under each grant allocation will be used during the remainder of the program implementation period, and it also sends quarterly updates on actual fund utilization.

Table 4. Progress and completion reporting for system transformation grants		
	Progress report	Completion report
Purpose	Assess and report on the performance progress and achievements of the grant, to inform improvements in the implementation of the grant so as to ensure that its intended aims are fulfilled. Share lessons to improve the grant activities and priorities. Ensure accountability and transparency of the grant and its commitments.	Evaluate and report on overall performance by providing a complete and systematic account of the performance and results of the project, issues related to implementation and measures taken to address them. Share reflections to improve the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of future such projects and GPE processes. Ensure accountability and transparency of the grant and its commitments.
Frequency	Once per year throughout grant implementation. The first annual progress report covering the first 12 months of implementation must be submitted no later than 15 months after the official grant start date (i.e., 3 months after the first anniversary of the start date). For the final year of grant implementation, a completion report can be submitted in lieu of a separate full progress report, provided that the following data are provided by June 30th, for the final year of implementation (up to 12 months): • key data required for GPE's corporate reporting: Global numbers and beneficiary data. • Program implementation ratings if the grant was active as of June 30th. • Other data requested by GPE Secretariat. Please contact a Grant Operations Officer for exceptions to this reporting calendar.	Once at completion, within 6 months of grant closing date.
Format	Reports should be submitted in the GPE reporting portal. Please contact the grant operations officer responsible for your country if you require assistance in accessing the portal.	Reports should be submitted in the GPE reporting portal. Please contact the grant operations officer responsible for your country if you require assistance in accessing the portal.

Contents (Highlights)	All relevant mandatory reporting items as indicated in the GPE's standard reporting template such as analysis of progress and performance on each of the program objectives; indication of any (current or previous) challenges and proposed remediation and their degree of success at subsequent follow up; and reporting on global numbers and number of beneficiaries.	All relevant mandatory reporting items as indicated in GPE's standard reporting templates such as efficiency and efficacy by grant objective; coordination and partnerships forged; snapshot of management and fiduciary performance; successful practices and lessons; potential for sustainability and related factors; reporting on global numbers and number of beneficiaries.
Reporting Processes	The report should be prepared by the grant agent and then shared for input with the government, local education group, education cluster or any other group as applicable or as per alternative governance arrangements before submission to the Secretariat.	
Timing	Within 15 months the start date of the grant, and annually thereafter.	No later than 6 months after the actual grant closing date.

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