GPE Transforming Education



GRANT AGENTS

Working Together for Effective Partnership

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 What Does it Mean to Be a GPE Partner?

04 Summary

05 What Is a Grant Agent?

06 Grant Agent Criteria and Selection

07 Grant Agent Accountabilities

08 The Grant Agent Role in Practice

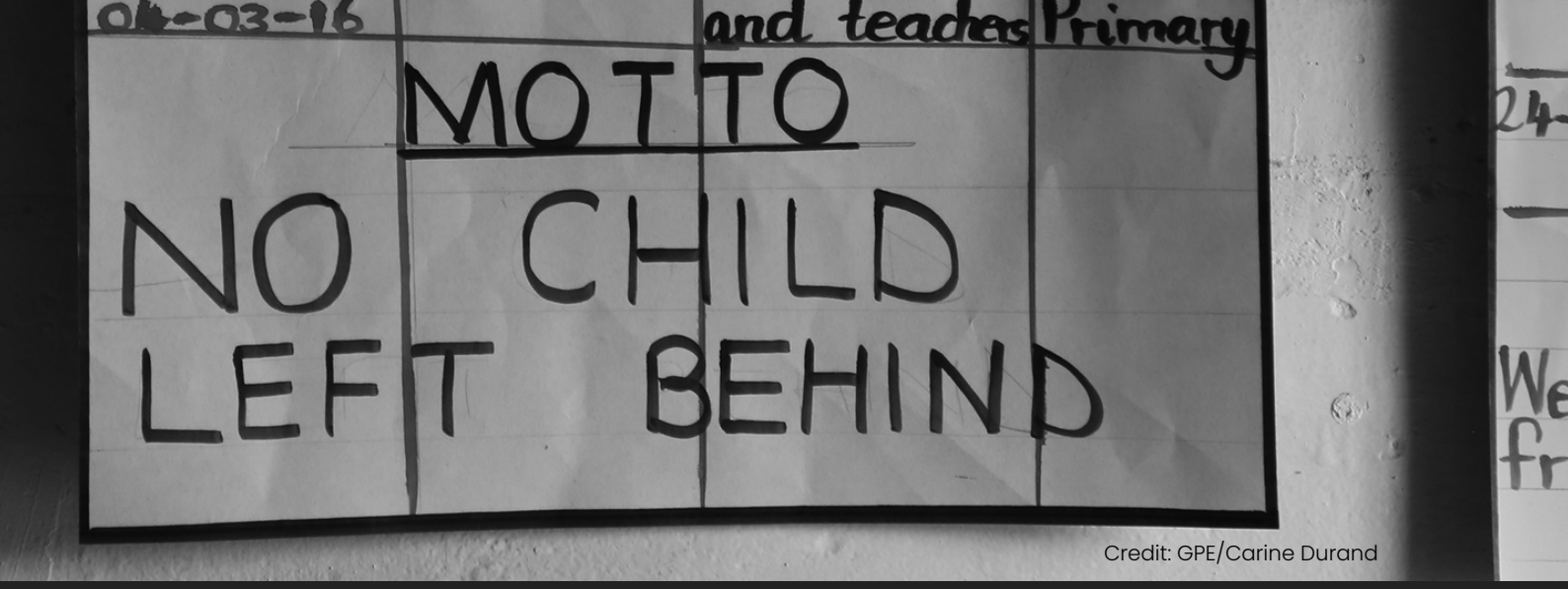
10 Resources

Credit (cover photo): GPE/Kelley Lynch
Credit (this page): UNICEF Burundi/Colfs

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GPE PARTNER?



Credit: GPE/Chantal Rigaud



Credit: GPE/Carine Durand

SUMMARY

Grant agents play a critical role in delivering GPE's vision, mission, goals and objectives. Without grant agents, GPE would not be able to provide financial support to partner support to countries.

Grant agents therefore also provide an essential service to GPE partner countries. This can strengthen the grant agent's relationship with the government partner and position the grant agent as an influential local education group partner. It can also make these relationships more complex.

Clear information on roles, responsibilities and accountabilities is necessary for grant agents to do their job effectively and to manage expectations from governments, other local education group partners and the GPE Secretariat.

Grant agents must work closely with government and other partners to ensure that grant-funded programs are well designed, effectively implemented and aligned with overall education sector plans, policies and systems. GPE-financed programs should contribute to improve the capacity of the national education system to deliver results.



Credit: GPE/Stephan Bachenheimer

What Is a Grant Agent?

'Grant agent' is the term used to refer to any GPE partner assigned to receive GPE grant funds, either on behalf of a partner country or for specific programs such as Knowledge and Innovation Exchange or Education out Loud. This document concerns the grant agent role as it pertains to grants to partner countries.

Grant agents for grants to partner countries must work closely with government and other partners to ensure that grant-funded programs are well designed and aligned with overall education sector plans, policies and systems. GPE-financed programs should contribute to improve the capacity of the national education system to deliver results.

GPE depends on grant agents to ensure efficient and effective program implementation. Grant agents therefore have a critical role to play in GPE's efforts to strengthen education systems in partner countries.



Credit: GPE/Chantal Rigaud

Grant Agent Criteria and Selection

Before serving as a grant agent, agencies or organizations must establish a Financial Procedures Agreement with GPE's Trustee, the World Bank. To qualify for this, they must meet a set of specified minimum standards regarding financial management, institutional capacity and self-investigative powers.

Grant agents are selected by the government through an open and transparent process, laid out in GPE's grant agent selection guidelines. Grant agent selection is endorsed by the local education group. The coordinating agency generally helps facilitate the selection process, which is then reviewed by the GPE Secretariat to verify that agreed procedures have been followed. In case of any concerns, recourse can be made to GPE's Conflict Resolution Procedures.

Dialogue leading to the appointment of grant agents should be transparent and participatory. Before considering options for who the best grant agent might be, the government and partners must agree on a scope of work for the grant program, focusing on strategic efforts to unblock sector bottlenecks, as well as preferred implementation modalities to ensure optimal system strengthening. The grant agent that is best able to deliver on that scope of work with a preferred modality should be selected for the role. This means grant agent selection should be informed by consideration of potential grant agents' capacity to use appropriately aligned and harmonized delivery modalities, their ability to support capacity building within national education systems to deliver on the preferred scope of work, and their ability to provide relevant technical support.



Credit: GPE/Kelley Lynch

Grant Agent Accountabilities

In 2019, GPE's Board of Directors adopted an 'Accountability Matrix' to clarify what is expected from different GPE stakeholders to enable the partnership to achieve its vision and goals. In the Accountability Matrix, grant agent accountabilities are addressed separately for the education sector plan development grant (ESPDG; renamed 'system capacity grant' in GPE's 2025 strategy) and education sector program implementation grant (ESPIG; renamed 'system transformation grant' in the 2025 strategy).

Grant agents are accountable for their support to program implementation to governments and to the GPE Board via the Secretariat.

In addition, grant agents have accountabilities as GPE partners who are represented in GPE's governance structures. Their accountabilities include:

For grants –

- Support the development of grant applications in collaboration with the government and local education group
- Implement or support the implementation of grant activities in accordance with the grant application, including any agreed technical assistance and capacity building
- Ensure effective fiduciary controls are applied
- Ensure required grant reporting is delivered in a timely way
- Contribute to the monitoring of the education sector plan/policies by reporting on or supporting government to report on grant implementation progress to the local education group at least twice a year

For the partnership –

- Contribute to government ownership and inclusive policy dialogue through the local education group
- Engage regularly in policy dialogue around sector analysis and the implementation and monitoring of education sector plans
- Support the coordinating agency in promoting harmonization and alignment of financial and technical support



Credit: GPE/Kelley Lynch

The Grant Agent Role in Practice

Although GPE's grants are often in focus at country level, the grant processes are meant to have an impact beyond the funding. Grant agents can help ensure GPE processes lead to:

- Strengthened data and analysis
- Gender-responsive education sector plans and policies
- Sufficient and equitable domestic education financing
- Addressing underfunded priorities such as gender equality
- Capacity building for strengthened education systems
- Effective, harmonized and inclusive policy dialogue and aligned donor support
- Learning and adaptation for the achievement of results

All of these areas have a particular focus on vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Details of the roles, responsibilities and challenges faced by grant agents vary across agencies and contexts. This section covers some of the elements of the role that grant agents should be aware of, though this is not an exhaustive list.

GPE grant processes are designed to promote inclusive, results-focused policy dialogue around education sector challenges and strategies, as well as to leverage domestic financing and aligned support from partners. This is significantly different from a standard project approach and may be more work intensive. It requires additional engagement in policy dialogue and sector coordination. Grant agents must manage their own role as a development partner in addition to their role as a GPE grant agent. The specific requirements and procedures involved in the latter can sometimes result in demanding relationships and challenging situations.



Credit: GPE/David K. Bridges

Direct costs to cover grant agents' operational expenses are included in the grant amount and must be negotiated with the government. It is important to achieve a common understanding of needs and expectations up front. Involving the government and local education group partners in such discussions will help ensure that expectations are clear and reflected in grant applications and budgets.

On request, the GPE Secretariat can help facilitate this conversation by sharing information on why these costs are drawn from the grant and by providing benchmarks on what share of the grant resources are reasonable relative to different contexts and related grant agent roles and responsibilities. Grant agent operational expenses are likely to be higher in contexts with capacity constraints that require the grant agent to play an implementing role, or where conflict and fragility make implementation particularly challenging.

It is important that grant agent management both in-country and at headquarters are aware of GPE principles, processes and requirements in order to ensure oversight of the specific accountabilities assigned to grant agents, and to ensure accurate communication around GPE grant funding. Their involvement can also enable higher-level conversations among partners at country-level to unblock bottlenecks and facilitate progress in sector collaboration and grant implementation, helping to ensure that processes are conducted smoothly and in the best interest of the country.

If needed, grant agents can also draw on support from the coordinating agency. In some cases, it might be helpful for grant agents to call attention to challenges through their own agencies or constituencies.

You can find information about GPE's engagement in a country by selecting the country on the 'Where we work' of the GPE website. You will be able to see the Secretariat contact person and which partner holds the coordinating agency role. You will also find a copy of the country's education sector plan, as well as documents for GPE grants. This can help you identify the best entry point for connecting.

RESOURCES

Country-Level Guide: Recommended Education Sector and GPE Grants Processes

Principles Toward Effective Local Education Groups

LEG Self-Assessment and Performance Feedback Tools

Terms of Reference for GPE Secretariat's Country-Level Role

Terms of Reference for Coordinating Agencies

Grant Agents Minimum Standards

Terms of Reference for Education Sector Plan Development Grants (ESPDG) Grant Agents

Terms of Reference for Education Sector Plan Implementation Grants (ESPIG) Grant Agents

Standard Selection Process for Grant Agents

Guidelines for ESPDGs

Guidelines for ESPIGs Multiplier

ESPIG Grant Application Guidelines

ESPIG Policy

Conflict Resolution Procedures

Policy and Communications Protocol on Misuse of GPE Trust Funds

Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)

GRANT AGENTS

Working Together for Effective Partnership

GPE Transforming Education