Frequently asked questions[1]

General

What guidance should be followed to make an application for Accelerated Funding for Covid-19?

The Guidelines for the COVID Accelerated Funding Window.

Is there a deadline to submit an application for COVID Accelerated Funding?

Applications are expected to be received between April and September 2020.

Is there an application form?

Yes, there is a cover note for COVID accelerated funding applications.

Is there a template for program documents or the budget?

No. The Grant agent can use their own program document and budget templates. The program standards show the key information that GPE is expecting.

Given approved ESPIGS are slowing down, from a country perspective, is it better to go ahead and ask for COVID Accelerated Funding rather than restructuring existing programs?

Countries should determine their needs related to COVID and apply for COVID Accelerated Funding where it would be useful to address those needs. In the medium to longer-term, we encourage countries to look at the impact of COVID on their ESPIGs.

Eligibility and amount

Which countries are eligible?

All ESPIG-eligible countries, with the exception of Syria. In total 67 countries are eligible.

What was the Board's rationale for limiting funding to 67 countries?

It is a question of available funding. Only $250 million could initially be allocated from the GPE Fund. It was determined that more than US$600 million would be needed to cover allocations to just the 67 countries if they all requested for funds. Due to high demand, in May the Board increased the total funding window to US$500 million.

How much is available from the COVID Accelerated Funding Window in total?

US$500 million: US$475 million for country-level grants and US$25 million for regional and global activities.

[1] FAQs were updated subsequent to April 2020 in response to new questions.

How much is available per country?
Allocations are based on the country's school aged population. Countries with larger populations are allocated a higher amount. The allocations range from US$750,000 to US$20 million per country. Please refer to the March Board paper or the May Board paper for a list of allocations.

What is the age range of "school-aged children" used to determine a country's COVID-19 AF allocation?
We have relied on UNESCO and our definition is Primary school age (6-11 years) and lower secondary school age (12-14 years).

Is the window first-come first-served?
The first US$125 million out of the initial US$225 million for country-level grants was demand-driven. The next US$100 million was reserved for distribution according to needs-based criteria, as demand exceeded supply. As additional funding became available, the Board increased the total funding window to US$500 million which ensured that all eligible countries could receive an allocation.

Is there a possibility that funds will become unavailable while a country is still preparing its application?
Under the initial US$250 million window, where the first US$125 million was demand-driven, it was possible that funds would become unavailable. But following the increase to US$500 million, each country was eligible for a specific allocation. The Secretariat will regularly make available information on the countries that have applied and amounts that have been approved.

Can countries combine their funds and make one application for the region?
A combined application would be permissible, but it would need to have agreement between all countries.

In federal countries what will the breakdown of the COVID allocation be?
The breakdown is for the countries to decide, just like for ESPIGs. One application can be made for the whole country if the regions/entities decide so.

Can a country submit two applications – a first one for mitigation, and subsequently for recovery?
GPE can only commit funding for approved applications. However, the country can submit two applications. We stand ready to process applications rapidly as soon as they come in.

Grant Agent selection and fees

Which agencies are already accredited as Grant Agents for an ESPIG (have a Financial Procedures Agreement in place)?

1. Asian Development Bank (ADB)
2. Agence française de développement (AFD)
3. Enabel (Belgian Development Agency)
4. CARE USA
5. Concern International
6. Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)
7. Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
8. Save the Children UK
9. Save the Children USA
10. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
11. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
12. UNESCO
13. UNICEF
14. The World Bank Group

All the above entities are eligible to become grant agents. The Board of Directors has waived the requirement for a formal grant-level assessment of INGOs (CARE USA, Concern International, Save the Children UK/USA) for allocations above US$5 million, noting the Secretariat will assess risk as part of the review of any such allocations.

Does the Grant Agent have to be the same as the GA for 'regular' Accelerated Funding'?
If a grant agent has been selected for the 'regular' Accelerated Funding window announced in December 2019, the government can decide to maintain this grant agent for the COVID-19 accelerated funding, provided that said grant agent is available and has the capacity to serve in this role.

GAs selected for December Accelerated Additional Financing can be maintained for COVID-19 AF grants without a new selection process: Afghanistan (UNICEF), Haiti (UNICEF), Madagascar (WB), Mali (WB), Mozambique (UNICEF), Nigeria (UNICEF), Somalia (Save for FGS and UNICEF for Puntland), Sudan (WB), Burkina Faso (UNICEF), Zimbabwe (Save).

Aside from the pre-determined GAs, is it the Secretariat's expectation that the GA of an active ESPIG—or pending application for an ESPIG—will be selected as the GA for the COVID-19 AF grant?
Except for the situation where a grant agent has been selected for the 'regular' Accelerated Funding window envelopes announced in December 2019, the process should be open and transparent, but with reduced timeline to allow for rapid response. To avoid delays in the transfer of funds, grant agents must be selected among agencies that have a Financial Procedures Agreement for the GPE Fund executed prior to the submission of the application. Needless to say, the grant agent will also need to be available and have the capacity to serve in this role. For grant agents that need to sign a separate agreement with the government for

the COVID-19 grant, the grant agent needs to ensure this will not delay the process.

Will Grant Agent fees be taken from the grant amount or be in addition to the grant?
The agency fee is paid on top of the grant and is intended to cover indirect costs, typically covering HQ costs. The direct implementation costs including supervision fees come out of the grant itself and are budgeted separately in the grant application.

Is there any flexibility by GPE regarding the agency fees given the current exceptional circumstances?
The maximum Board approved agency fee is 7% and this can only be changed through an additional Board decision. Agency fees are designed to cover indirect cost recovery. Reasonable direct program administration and management costs should be submitted in the application budget and are funded within the grant allocation.

Are there any COVID-related terms and conditions that the Grant Agent should be aware of?
The Secretariat has produced guidelines for the COVID window, but there are no specific Terms and Conditions. The Financial Procedures Agreement between each Grant Agent and the Trustee remains the legal basis.

Will GPE provide a PDG to develop grants?
No.

Response plans

What reference framework should the grant application be based on?

A publicly available government response plan related to COVID-19. This plan will need to be submitted as part of the application package.

Is there a template for the response plan?
No.

Can the program be based on the Education Cluster's COVID response plan?
Yes, if that plan was developed together with government.

Does the Secretariat have a preference/requirement as to how the response plan should be made publicly available?
The aim of having the plan be publicly available is to increase transparency and accountability of the government's response. We understand that the dissemination can take various forms from one country to the next. The program standards outline that the proposal should explain where and how the response plan has been made publicly available (e.g. a Government website, distribution to key stakeholders, etc.).

What should be the scope of the publicly available plan? Are we referring to a multi-sectoral plan or an education-specific response plan?
The plan can be government-wide or education sector specific. As long as the multi-sectoral plan includes an education component, that will suffice.

Is there a requirement about what sub-sectors the response plan needs to include?
No. We are aware that some countries are sequencing the planning around COVID. The only requirement is that GPE funded activities should be based on a publicly available plan – we understand that this will look different depending on the context.

In countries where the government has not been recognized by the international community, or is not functional, how can the country meet the requirement of having a publicly available government response plan?
This qualifies as an exceptional circumstance and the GPE Operating Principles in Complex Emergencies should be applied in such cases. The principles outline that where direct participation of government in standard GPE processes is not practical or feasible, the remaining LEG can fulfil these functions.

Does the Secretariat quality assure response plans?
No.

Program development

What are eligible expenditures?
All activities related to mitigate and recover from the impact of COVID 19 on the education system. They could for example include:

- Production of learning continuity programs broadcast through radio, tv, and online, and the provision of resources such as radios, textbooks, study guides and equipment to the poorest. This can be accompanied through free call-in numbers for asking questions, or through establishing a remote tutoring service using toll-free numbers at a local level.
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and teachers; make sure that children with special educational needs and disabilities are included in continuity of learning programs. Provide appropriate psycho-social support to children and teachers.
- Conducting sample assessments at different grade levels to track progress in key areas like early grade literacy and numeracy and key subjects at secondary. This is essential to know who is being reached and how well students are learning so that interventions can be adapted accordingly.
- The poorest will be affected the most by economic shocks (household income in

Sierra Leone fell from US$336 to US$131 during the Ebola epidemic and there was an increase in girls getting pregnant). Interventions will likely be needed to protect the poorest and most vulnerable and enable them to continue learning, such as conditional cash transfers.

- Officials and teachers may have been on other duties or forced to leave their jobs. Crisis and post- crisis education budgets will be under pressure but for rapid and effective recovery national systems must keep their teachers. It is essential to support them through the crisis, enable them to support continuity of learning and prepare them for recovery and reopening as well as addressing recruitment gaps if these emerge.
- Schools may have been used for other purposes and may need refurbishing and require new supplies of books and equipment. Reopening will need to be planned and prepared for with health and wellbeing ensured.
- The closure of schools, even with mitigation measures, will result in slower learning progress. The poorest are likely to fall further behind their richer peers. When schools reopen, large-scale assessment can identify learning gaps and inform remedial programming and learning opportunities so that all children catch up to grade level rapidly

Can the grant retroactively fund expenditures which are eligible activities under the grant?

Yes, provided such activities have been included within an approved proposal and such retroactive financing complies with the Grant Agent's own policies and procedures. However, partners need to be aware that there is a risk that the grant does not get approved.

Is non-basic subsector (senior secondary/higher education institutions) excluded from the COVID19 response, or is it intended to be a system wide response support?

As per the country level guide: GPE provides funding "related to basic education, defined as pre-primary, primary, lower secondary education and second-chance learning opportunities. It may be possible to support early childhood care and education and upper secondary education in certain cases. (Especially for countries that have achieved high levels of access and retention in basic and lower secondary education.)"

What is the expected implementation period for programs?

The implementation period for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding is 12 to 18 months. It is expected that resources are used for activities to mitigate and recover from the COVID crisis.

What does the 12-18 month implementation period correspond with – the end of activities?

This means that implementation activities must be completed by the closing date. Certain

payments may still be made after the closing date as long as these are in line with the Grant agent's own policies.

We note that the program standards mention a 1-month effectiveness date. Is this mandatory?
We are keen for these funds to quickly support the government's COVID response and hence we will be looking closely as part of our QA review at the effective start date of the program. Any derogation from the 1-month effectiveness would require a strong justification, explaining why later availability doesn't negatively impact the proposed support.

What is the role of the LEG in the program development process?
As with 'regular' Accelerated Funding, the grant agent works with the government, LEG and Education Cluster to develop the program. There should be evidence that LEG and Education Cluster have been consulted and that they endorse the program.

Will the Education Cluster play its usual role in program development, seeing that it is Accelerated Funding?
Yes, where an Education Cluster has been activated.

Will these be entirely new grants or is there a possibility of topping up existing ESPIGs specifically for COVID-19 response?
It really depends on what is the most efficient approach for the country. The Secretariat wants to be flexible.

If the country decides to top up an existing grant, how is it processed by the Secretariat?
The Secretariat will process it as a COVID accelerated funding, using the simplified program standards and rapid process. It will thus not be considered as a revision of the ESPIG. So strictly speaking, from GPE's perspective it will not be considered as additional financing to the existing ESPIG, but as a separate grant delivered through the same mechanism as the existing ESPIG.

Could COVID Accelerated Funding support sector-pooled programs?
Yes, if the education sector plan includes interventions to support COVID needs and Accelerated Funding is earmarked towards that end.

How does the COVID window link with the multi-country ESPDG managed by UNICEF? What is the thinking around the alignment of these two different funding allocations?
The multi-country ESPDG, managed by UNICEF, provides funding to 87 countries to kick start an education system response to COVID-19. Funding can be used for activities including coordination and preparation of contingency and response plans; supporting implementation of safe school guidelines; and design and preparation of alternative education delivery systems (list is not exhaustive). As such, the grants from the COVID

Accelerated Funding Window will be able to build on some of the work funded by the multi-country ESPDG.

M&E

What are the monitoring and evaluation requirements for COVID-19 accelerated funding grants?

Detailed guidance on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of COVID-19 accelerated funding grants can be found on the COVID-19 section of the GPE website. Grant agents are required to include costed monitoring plans and learning from evidence approaches in grants. Monitoring plans are required to include core indicators specified in the M&E guidance, wherever relevant.

Are there any specific M&E requirements related to gender equity and equality?

Grant agents are strongly encouraged to incorporate a gender equity and equality lens in all monitoring and evaluation activities. Detailed guidance is available in Annex I of the M&E guidance. At a minimum, all core indicators specified in the M&E guidance must be disaggregated by gender. The Secretariat will review the first round of grant proposals received to identify strong examples of interventions that advance gender equality and areas where these interventions can be strengthened. Guidance resulting from this review will be posted on the GPE website and will serve as a resource for strengthening future proposals.

Review of applications

How does the Secretariat quality assure COVID Accelerated Funding programs?

The Secretariat quality assures the program once the application has been submitted by partners, using program standards that have been tailored for COVID Accelerated Funding programs. If a country submits a joint application for "regular" accelerated funding (envelopes announced in December 2019) and COVID accelerated funding, the Secretariat will also refer to the regular AF standards.

Does the Secretariat quality assure or provide guidance to draft program documents?

There is no mandatory quality assurance of draft program documents. The Secretariat is

available to provide feedback to drafts if requested by partners but this is not encouraged.

Could you please clarify the process for reviewing applications if an education plan is in place but the national response plan is still underway?

Our understanding is that most countries have already drafted a response plan for the immediate measures, which may be amended for the medium term. There is no expectation that would be a very lengthy process similar to the ESP. To ensure transparency and accountability, it is expected that whatever plan put forward as the basis for the funding is a publicly available response plan.

Can you tell us more about how the Secretariat will process and prioritize the applications?

As mentioned in the guidelines, applications should be sent to the following email address gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org. They will be processed in the order that they are received. If the applications do not meet the program standards, then modifications will be requested and the subsequent resubmission will be treated as a new application for the purposes of prioritizing the review of applications.

Approval

Who makes a decision on the application?

The CEO of GPE Secretariat has been delegated authority to approve all COVID Accelerated Funding applications until 30 September 2020.

How quickly is a decision made?

Our guidelines provide a timeline of 2-3 weeks for application review and CEO approval, but the Secretariat will make every effort to review them sooner than this, taking into account the quality of the application and the volume of applications received.

Transfer of funds

How quickly are funds transferred?

When the Grant Agent sends a request to the Secretariat to transfer funds, it is generally processed the following month. However, under exceptional circumstances, and specifically relating to the COVID-19 funding and accelerated funding, transfers can happen faster than the usual 1-month turnaround. Once an application is received, the Secretariat will flag these to the Trustee to facilitate smooth transfer.

Reporting

What reporting is required from Grant Agents?

At the end of the implementation period, the Grant Agent is expected to submit a completion report to the GPE Secretariat. In terms of the reporting on the full results framework of the program, for programs with an implementation period of less than 18 months, the first progress report serves as an implementation completion report. The report should be submitted within 6 months of the closing date of the program. In case the implementation period is more than 18 months, a progress report on the first 12 months needs to be submitted. The standardized template for progress reports should be used. This template should also be used as an implementation completion report template.

Grant Agents will be required to fill out a quarterly survey that will request information on adaptive learning from grant implementation (including implementation progress of grant components) and progress on the core indicators specified in the M&E guidance (as data becomes available).

Communications

Are there any guidelines on communications related to Accelerated Funding programs?

Yes, there is a protocol for media outreach, which applies to media and general outreach in GPE partner countries related to GPE grants and to any other GPE-supported program. It includes, but is not limited to, press releases, grant signings and/or related ceremonies, press conferences, media interviews, publications, training programs, seminars, symposia, public information materials, and items purchased with GPE funds.