CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE 4/11/2023

TO: Laura Frigenti, CEO		
FROM: Sven Baeten, Jo Bourne, Padraig Power, and Kirsten Majgaard		
SUBJECT: Belize Multiplier Grant Application		
Country: Belize	**Grant Agent:** Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)	**Co-financing:** IDB US$15M
Grant Type: Multiplier	**Agency fee % (+US$ amount):** 5% (US$250,000)	**Expected Start Date:** 1/15/2024
Amount: US$5M **GA Supervision fee % (+US$ amount):** 0	**Grant duration:** 4 years	**Expected End Date:** 1/15/2028

Action request

Approve the Multiplier application from Belize.

Grant Summary

- Belize is a multiplier-only country that recently became eligible to receive GPE funds. The proposed grant for decision is a US$5million multiplier grant with US$15million of co-financing from the IDB. The multiplier grant would be the first GPE grant in Belize and the first GPE grant with the IDB as grant agent.
- The multiplier grant has been developed at an accelerated pace. GPE's engagement with Belize began in June 2022 and over the past 11 months, Belize confirmed its interest to join the partnership, identified co-financing for the grant, launched its local education group- the first sector coordination group in the country, completed its analysis of the enabling factors for systems transformation, and prepared its program.
- The multiplier grant would support the "Skills for the Future" program, which aims to contribute to closing the skills gap in Belize. GPE funds would support closing the gap in foundation skills for primary students with low education attainment, support for special education, strengthening of the Belize Education Management Information System's (BEMIS) and its ability to track vulnerable groups, gender interventions targeting specific challenges for girls and boys, and impact evaluations to inform potential scale up of successful interventions. IDB funds will finance the construction of science labs in six secondary schools, strengthened instruction of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) in primary and secondary, and two TVET courses. Program components are aligned to the Belize Education Sector Plan, as Belize did not elect to do a partnership compact at this time.
- The multiplier grant played an essential role in mobilizing the IDB investment loan for Belize, resulting in a larger lending operation than has been typical for the sector. Criteria for additionality, co-financing, and debt sustainability have been met.

Current Portfolio

- Belize joined the partnership in April 2023. The multiplier grant would be the first core GPE grant in Belize. The country received a US$200,000 program development grant in February 2023 to support program preparation.

Outcomes of the ITAP enabling factors assessment

- The Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) concurred with the country self-assessment and rated the area of data and evidence as high priority, citing gaps in the education management information system, learning assessment system, and use of data.
- In its response to ITAP, Belize committed to addressing gaps in the high priority area. Belize is currently investing in the improvement of its education data management system, including supporting data entry and integration of disability data. The multiplier grant will also build the capacity of education officials to use the data and the system capacity grant (SCG) can be used for further training in advanced data analysis, data presentation, and graphics.
- Belize is also in the process of revising its learning assessments as part of its roll-out of a new competency based national curriculum. It has distributed assessment guidelines to support schools in the transition to the new curriculum and is monitoring the roll-out closely in pilot schools. Investments are proposed in designing national benchmark assessments to measure the efficacy of teaching and learning using the revised curriculum.
- To address ITAP's points on domestic financing, which acknowledges that despite the high volume (8.7% of GDP in the middle of the pandemic) the main challenge for Belize will be to identify education policies that help use resources in an effective and efficient way, Belize responded that it is currently undertaking an analysis of education financing that will inform investment strategies and policy development and will be improving resource allocation through an existing program.

Significant Opportunities:

- Reinforce a coordinated system approach in Belize: The local education group has met twice since its inception, driven by the need to support GPE grant processes. There is early evidence that this new sector coordination mechanism is helping partners share evidence, collaborate, and problem solve together- harmonizing actions and contributing to a system approach to developing the sector. Maintaining momentum around this new coordinating mechanism beyond a GPE grant will be critical in the months to come and can help to reinforce its use and purpose as a sector-wide forum. GPE may also continue to pursue dialogue on a partnership compact if it can help to solidify the new partnership approach in country.
- Strengthen GPE's collaboration with the IDB in the region: The multiplier grant creates an opportunity to deepen the relationship and collaboration with the IDB, a key partner in the region, as the IDB will be a first time Grant Agent.

- Strong equity focus and learning component in the grant: The multiplier grant addresses gaps in foundational skills for children most in need, gender disparities fostering STEAM education for girls and providing interventions to retain boys and reengage them in the education system, and will strengthen the capacity of teachers to serve children with special needs. The GPE financing also includes a significant learning component of high regional and global relevance with three impact evaluations planned on ed-tech solutions and support to students with special needs.

Significant Issues and Risks

- Operational risks of a new grant agent: The IDB team is not familiar with GPE processes, policies, and practices, which may impact on the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the grant. This risk will be mitigated by continuing to maintain open and regular communication with the IDB team.
- Sustaining sector alignment and engagement of partners: Given the nascent status of the local education group and limited size of external financing in the country. This risk will be mitigated by maintaining a close relationship with the Coordinating Agency and ministry, recalling the functions outlined in the local education group's terms of reference, and providing support as necessary.

Recommendation

The Review Meeting (RM) concluded, based on the Secretariat's quality assurance review, that the **RM recommends to the CEO the approval of an allocation of US$5,000,000 for Belize with IDB as Grant Agent**.

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Grant: Multiplier
Country: Belize

CEO/2023/03-XX–XXXX Approval of Belize's Multiplier grant: The CEO in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors:

- Approves an amount of US$5,000,000 as multiplier grant with IDB as grant agent, plus an additional US$250,000 in agency fees.

Date: April 14, 2023



Laura Frigenti, CEO

The CEO Decision Memo should not exceed 3 pages.