Review Meeting Memo to CEO

April 28, 2021

Grant Information	
Grant Type:	**Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grant**
Amount:	**US$ 10 million**
Country:	**Eastern Caribbean States**

The Review Meeting (RM) was held on January 15, 2021 and was led by: Jo Bourne (Chief Technical Officer), Padraig Power (Chief Financial Officer), Margarita Focas Licht (Chief, Effective Partnership), Kirsten Majgaard (Quality Assurance, Team Lead), Sven Baeten (Grant Operations, Team Lead), Nilse Ryman (County Engagement and Policy, Regional Manager) and attended by: Talia Miranda De Chaisemartin (Country Lead), Arianne Wessal (Quality Assurance), Jorge Ubaldo Colin Pescina (Education Specialist), Lida Homa (Notetaker) and Arijeta Blakqori Mjekiqi (Drafted CEO Memo). As part of the CEO review and approval step, additional clarifications were requested from the country, which the team and the RM had to review prior to finalizing the FRR.

The RM concluded, based on successful completion of the Secretariat's quality assurance review, to recommend to the CEO the approval of an allocation of US$ 10 million for a Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) Maximum Country Allocation (MCA) for Eastern Caribbean States with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States as Grant Agent.

The full recommendation is included in the next page.

Kirsten Majgaard



Quality Assurance, Team Lead

Sven Baeten



Grant Operations, Team Lead

Margarita Focas Licht



Chief Effective Partnership

Padraig Power



Chief Financial Officer

Jo Bourne



Chief Technical Officer

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Grant: Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grant
Country: Eastern Caribbean States

CEO/2021/04-XX–Allocation for a Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grant to Eastern Caribbean States: The CEO, in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors:

1. Notes that the ESPIG request has been assessed based on the relevant QAR processes for funding model requirements and program standards. The request is in the compliance with the requirements and standards for accessing the maximum country allocations for a Regional ESPIG, as described in the application and assessed in the Secretariat quality assurance review phase III report.

2. Approves an allocation from GPE trust funds for an ESPIG, as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table 1, subject to:
   a. Availability of funds.
   b. Board decision BOD/2012/11-04 on commitment of trust funds for ESPIGs in annual installments.
   c. Review Meeting's recommendation for funding set out in Table 1.

3. Requests the Trustee to withhold the transfer of funds should the outstanding actions captured in the institutional strengthening action plan not be met.

4. Requests the Secretariat to:
   a. Include in its notification of grant approval to the Eastern Caribbean States the requests for observations, report-backs and conditions as recommended by the Review Meeting and set out in Table 2.
   b. Include an update on the issues listed as "report backs" and "conditions" in the Grant Performance Report in accordance with the specified timeline.

Approved: 

Not Approved: _____

Alice P. Albright
Chief Executive Officer
Global Partnership for Education

Date: May 3, 2021

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Table 1: Application Summary and Allocation Recommendations (in US $):

Country: Eastern Caribbean States[1]		
a.	ESPIG Maximum Country Allocation	10,000,000
b.	Allocation Requested (100%)	10,000,000
c.	Fixed Part	10,000,000
d.	**Allocation Recommended**	**10,000,000**
e.	Grant Agent	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
f.	Agency Fee % - Amount	700,000
g.	Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs	1,007,187 [2]
h.	Period	4 years
i.	Expected Start Date	July 1st, 2021
j.	Funding Source	GPE Fund

Table 2 – Review Meeting Observations, Report-Backs, And Conditions

Country: Eastern Caribbean States	
Observations	The Secretariat would like to commend the OECS Commission, the Member States, and all the partners for developing a strong regional program with a clear vision and direction for both the regional and national level. The effort, reflection, and collaboration between the regional body and Member States is particularly recognized.
Report Back	Report-back on annual figures of domestic financing for the education sector as data becomes available. Report-back on all baselines and targets in the Results Framework in the first annual report. Report-back on the targeting criteria that will be used to select vulnerable communities that will benefit from refurbished ECD classrooms in the first annual report.
Condition	Transfer of funds are conditional on OECS satisfactorily addressing outstanding actions stemming from the accreditation process, captured within the institutional strengthening action plan. Secretariat prior approval is required for any re-allocation of grant funds from the national level to the regional level.

GPC Comments Section	**none**

[1] Eastern Caribbean States allocation is a multi-country allocation, including Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines.
[2] This amount is to be funded from the grant and is not in addition to the grant amount.

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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – PHASE 3 (SECRETARIAT DELEGATED AUTHORITY)

APRIL 2021

EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES

Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grant

Proposed GPE Grant Amount: US$10 million
Fixed Part: US$10 million, of which US$ 1,007,187 for Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs
Variable Part: Not applicable
Implementation period: 4 years
Projected implementation start date: July 1st, 2021
Grant Agent: The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States

1 BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION SECTOR OVERVIEW

1.1. COUNTRY BACKGROUND

The Caribbean Regional application encompasses four Small Island Developing States (SIDS)- Dominica (DOM), Grenada (GRD), St. Lucia (SLU) and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), who decided to adopt a regional approach and combine their Maximum Country Allocations (MCAs) of US$2.5 million each into a single regional application for an Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG). The Caribbean application is unique in many ways and for this reason, the assessment of the US$10 million regional ESPIG has benefited from additional layers of scrutiny and critical examination. In addition to being a multi-country application that will support the implementation of a regional education sector plan, ESPIG funds will also support the development of regional public goods and include the participation of non-GPE Member States. Given the OECS Commission's role as Grant Agent and its institutional mandate to lead and coordinate implementation of the regional education sector plan, the Secretariat closely examined the nature of regional activities and expenditures, program implementation costs, and considered possible areas of conflict of interest. This report presents the outcomes of the Secretariat's assessment, which was guided by the policies and parameters set out in GPE's Regional ESPIG Guidelines[3].The four Caribbean SIDS

[3] GPE (2020). Guidelines for regional education sector program implementation grants. Consulted April 13th 2021, available online at: https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/guidelines-regional-education-sector-program-implementation-grants

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are part of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), an economic union that was established by the 1981 Treaty of Basseterre and the 2011 Revised Treaty of Basseterre. The OECS seeks to promote unity, cooperation, and regional integration amongst the 11 Member States for the collective benefit of its members and sustainable development of the region. The case for regionalism is strong in the Caribbean given the proximity of the islands and commonalities shared. Working together to address common challenges enables countries to reap the benefits of economies of scale, overcome constraints faced by small states, and more rapidly and efficiently achieve shared goals.

The small, open, and heavily tourism dependent economies of the OECS face common challenges including low economic growth, high debt, persistent fiscal deficits and vulnerabilities to external shocks.[4] Unemployment rates are high and are above 20% for GRD, SLU, and SVG, placing them in the highest decile in the world.[5] Given the high exposure to natural disasters and frequent need to re-invest in infrastructure and social programs, public debt in OECS Member States has also increased to 68% in 2018, surpassing prudential levels.[6] While levels of extreme poverty rate are low, moderate levels of poverty remain high and are linked with the prevalence of female-headed households.

The Caribbean is the second most environmental hazard-prone region in the world.[7] Climate change and other natural disasters have a negative impact not only on the economy, but on human lives and people's livelihoods. Average annual losses from hurricanes alone in the Caribbean are estimated at US$835 million and reached 226% of 2016 GDP in Dominica following Hurricane Maria.[8] Rising temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, and more extreme weather events are also expected, further threatening to erode progress made.

The economic and social fragility of the region has been compounded by the effects of COVID-19. The tourism sector, which on average accounts for 40% of GDP in the 4 GPE Member States, has been particularly affected and led to a significant decline in incomes and employment. School closures and the transition to distance learning has increased the vulnerability of those most in need, who are unable to access basic services and continue learning at the same pace as their peers. The road to economic and social recovery will be long and is likely to lead to even higher public debt levels in the medium term.

[4] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 5.
[5] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 5.
[6] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 8.
[7] OCHA (2020). Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: 2000-2019. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20191203-ocha-desastres_naturales.pdf
[8] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 8.

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Eastern Caribbean States	
Population (Thousands, in 2019[9])	DOM: 71.8 GRD: 112.0 SLU: 182.8 SVG: 110.6
Human Development Index Ranking (for 2019[10])	DOM: 98 /189 (high HDI) GRD: 78 /189 (high HDI) SLU: 89 /189 (high HDI) SVG: 94 /189 (high HDI)
Learning-adjusted Years of School (in 2020[11])	DOM: Boys:7.7 Girls:8.4 GRD: Boys:7.9 Girls:8.7 SLU: Boys:8.2 Girls:8.8 SVG: Boys:7.3 Girls:8.2
GDP (In millions of USD for 2019[12])	DOM: 506.6 GRD: 1,045.0 SLU: 1,079.2 SVG: 757.8
GDP per capita (In USD for 2019[13])	DOM: 7,055.5 GRD: 9,330.0 SLU: 9,350.7 SVG: 6,852.5
World Bank Income Classification Level (for 2020-21[14])	DOM: Upper Middle Income GRD: Upper Middle Income SLU: Upper Middle Income SVG: Upper Middle Income

1.2. EDUCATION SECTOR OVERVIEW

The four GPE Caribbean islands have a combined population of about 475,000 people out of which 13,000 are of pre-primary age, 46,000 are of primary age and 34,000 are of secondary-

[9] World Bank Data, population, total, Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL

[10] United Nations Development Program. (2019). Human Development Report 2019, Tables 7 to 15, Page 5, available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/statistical-data-tables-7-15

[11] World Bank, Human Capital Project. Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital

[12] World Bank Data, GDP (constant 2010 US$). Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD

[13] World Bank Data, GDP per capita (constant 2010 US$). Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD

[14] World Bank Country and Lending groups. Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519

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school age[15]. Education systems are very small, with the number of schools in the four islands ranging from 59 to 73 primary schools and from 15 to 27 secondary schools. Basic education is compulsory and consists of one year of pre-primary, 6 years of primary, and 5 years of secondary.

1.2.1. A regional approach to sector development

The Caribbean states have long recognized the value of working together to overcome disadvantages linked to their small-size and build greater resilience and scale in the education sector. Since 1981, the OECS Commission has supported joint education initiatives determined through a Council of Ministers of Education and supported by the OECS Education Development Management Unit (EDMU). In May 2011, the Council of Ministers of Education endorsed the ten-year OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS), providing a framework for educational development in the region, later extended to 2026. The OESS aims to ensure that every learner can succeed and encompasses 7 education imperatives, with a focus on the most vulnerable. Since its approval in 2011, 9 Member States of the OECS, including the 4 GPE Member States, have sought to implement the objectives through individual and collective action under the leadership of the EDMU. The regional priorities of the OESS reflect the national priorities of Member States, with most strategies implemented at the country level. Through the regional approach, implementation at country level can benefit from the use of regional public goods, common institutional infrastructure, technical assistance, and cooperation. The regional approach thus helps to leverage the expertise of other islands, compensate for small over-extended ministries, and accelerate the pace of development.

1.2.2 Equity:

All Member States have achieved universal primary education and achieved universal secondary education in 2012. The primary completion rates as reported by UIS are SLU (95%-2018), DOM (114%-2016), GRD (123%-2018), and SVG (106%- 2018), with no significant difference between boys or girls. In 2020, expected years of schooling averaged at a little more than 12 years for the 4 GPE Member States, with gender parity achieved except in SVG, where boys are

[15] Based on information from UIS' country pages for the four countries, retrieved June 15th 2020. http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/dm , http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/gd , http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/lc and http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/vc

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at a slight disadvantage.[16] Among the main barriers of education are cost [17] and perceived relevance of secondary education, which particularly affects young males. [18]

Access to pre-primary education remains a challenge in some areas as most of the offer is largely privatized. Regionally, only 61% of the day care facilities and 16% of the preschools are government-owned and operated.[19] Net enrollment rates for pre-primary range from 65% in SVG, 79% in SLU, and 90% in GRD with no information available for Dominica.[20] Small variations in gender participation are also noticeable at the pre-primary level, with more girls enrolled than boys. Low access is mainly due to the inability of families from lower social and economic groups to afford private provision of early childhood development (ECD) services, but low quality of service also plays a role. While the OECS has agreed on a minimum standard of operation, a large number of centers fall short of these standards and a lack of licensing certification and monitoring systems make them difficult to enforce. The region is considering establishing ECD Councils in each country with support from the OECS and UNICEF to further advance in this area.[21]

Opportunities to learn are also limited for children with special education needs (SEN). Little progress has been made in this area and the paucity of data hinders efforts to reach this group. The provision of education services is generally inadequate across Member States, with inadequate planning and no structured monitoring in place. Moreover, SEN policies are also at various stages of development across the region and harmonization of legislation and accompanying regulations is needed. As a result, some of the challenges facing this group include that not all students with SEN are attending special education schools, with some not attending any school at all, and students that are mainstreamed in primary schools are not receiving the support needed for their success. A holistic approach is needed to improve access to quality education for children with special needs in the region, which would include evidence-based planning, strengthened legislation, improved physical facilities and capacities for staff who interact with SEN learners.

1.2.3 Learning outcomes:

[16] World Bank, Human Capital Project. Available online at, retrieved Dec 1st 2020: https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital
[17] Organization of Eastern Caribbean States ESP 2012-21 (extended to 2026)
[18] Mary Cobbett & Mike Younger (2012) Boys' educational 'underachievement' in the Caribbean: interpreting the 'problem', Gender and Education, 24:6, 611-625, DOI: 10.1080/09540253.2012.677014
[19] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 24.
[20] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 11.
[21] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 25

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While access to primary and secondary education has significantly improved over the past decades, the quality of teaching and learning remains a challenge. Results from the primary exit examination show that a substantial number of students are unable to meet the standards (40% in SLU, 38% in DOM, 13% in SVG[22]), with students struggling more in Mathematics than English. [23] At the end of compulsory schooling students write the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). Out of the 6,274 students that wrote the CSEC in 2018 (2,891 males and 3,383 females) in the four GPE countries, only 33% attained the benchmark of 5 passes including in English and Math. While the overall number of students reaching the standard of success in CSEC remains low, there have been some small improvements between 2017 and 2018. The percentage of students attaining the benchmark increased from 69.1% to 73.0% in English and from 43.5% to 44.7% in Math, with similar results between females and males.[24]

Few teachers in the OECS have the necessary qualifications to teach Math, contributing to significantly lower student performance in the subject. A study of teacher demand and supply in the OECS revealed that over 40% of teachers at the secondary level were teaching out of field, with a significant gap in the area of Math.[25] Overall, the percentage of trained primary and secondary teachers remains low, particularly in certain countries. The percentage stands at 57% in DOM, 55% in GRD, 80% in SLU and 74% in SVG, with percentages for primary being higher than for secondary in all four countries.[26] Moreover, despite low pupil teacher ratios of about 13:1 in primary and 11:1 in secondary, one in three teachers do not demonstrate effective teacher-child interactions in class. Out of the domains assessed by the CLASS observation tool, teachers performed least well in the area of instruction.[27]

1.2.4 Efficiency:

The number of over-aged students and drop-outs are of concern, particularly at the secondary level. Whereas repetition rates for primary are fairly low and range from 2.1-2.8% across the four GPE Member States, rates vary widely for secondary and significantly increase in Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SLU: 0.1%, GRD: 3.7%, DOM: 7.4%, SVG: 17.5%).[28] The variance can be attributed to differences in policies across the OECS but is consistently higher for males. In certain grades in secondary, about 30% of students enrolled are more than 2 years over the expected age. In all countries the rate of overage males is at least twice the rate for females.

[22] Results are not directly comparable as SVG used the Caribbean Primary Exist Assessment (CPEA) whereas SLU and DOM used their own national assessments.
[23] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 10.
[24] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Document, page 12.
[25] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 11 and 12.
[26] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 9 and 10.
[27] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 10.
[28] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 12.

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With regards to drop-outs, while rates tend to be low for primary, they range from 7.4% to 15.1% at the secondary level.[29]

As mentioned above, the OECS Member States are characterized by relatively low pupil to teacher ratios across all levels of the education system. In 2017-18, the ratios ranged from 6:1 to 14:1 in pre-primary, 9:1 to 16:1 in primary, and 9:1 to 13:1 in secondary.[30] Governments have often sought to pursue a policy to increase those ratios thereby reducing the allocation to teachers' salaries and reallocating the "savings" to other line items in the education budget.[31] Examples of these policies include consolidating small schools where possible, introducing multi-grade schools in specific locations and having "shared" teachers across schools for certain subjects such as Physical Education, or French / Spanish. Efforts have led to small changes in pupil teacher ratios, as savings are concentrated in specific schools and not well-reflected in the averages. Cost savings is nevertheless allocated to activities such as teacher training, expansion of school feeding, and after school programs.

1.2.5 Monitoring of Sector Performance:

The EDMU leads on the implementation and monitoring of the OESS and relies on a system of joint annual planning and reporting to coordinate across the region. Every year, the CEO and Planners of the 9 English speaking Member States implementing the OESS gather to jointly plan and monitor the regional strategy. This meeting is followed by the meeting of the Council of Education Ministers, where Education Ministers gather to take decisions on joint initiatives and share lessons learnt. Development partners, teacher organizations, and universities are invited to attend this meeting, participating in joint monitoring and aligning their efforts accordingly.

A Mid-Term Review of the OESS was conducted in 2019, which led to a Ministerial decision to extend the OESS and develop a new regional implementation plan for 2021-2026. A wide range of partners contributed to the process and endorsed the new implementation plan. The OECS Commission, whose mandate includes coordination across the sector, is working on developing a Terms of Reference to better define the membership, functions, and operations of the Regional Education Group (REG). Partners that have participated and contributed to education sector processes at the regional level thus far include USAID, the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, the European Union, Hands Across the Sea, the University of the West Indies, the Joint Board of Teacher Education, the Caribbean Teacher Union, and the Caribbean Examinations Council.

[29] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 12.
[30] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 12.
[31] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 12.

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2 ESPIG DESCRIPTION

2.1 PAST ESPIG PERFORMANCE, IF APPLICABLE:

The last ESPIG for the four GPE Member States totaled USD$2 million and was approved in 2016, with the World Bank as Grant Agent (GA). The program aimed to tackle low learning outcomes at the primary level by using learning standards to support teaching and learning, improving teacher practices through professional development, strengthening school leadership and accountability, and reinforcing M&E capacity in the sector for evidence-based management and decision-making.

The program was rated moderately satisfactory and met or exceeded three of the four program development objectives. Under component 1 the program finalized learning standards for key subjects in grades 1-6, developed a formative assessment framework to monitor application of those standards, and prepared teachers for its use. Overall, 559 teachers from 50 primary schools across the four countries were trained, representing around 12% to 26% of all primary teachers in each of the countries. [32] This particular program component did not achieve its objective and observed only 24% of primary teachers using formative assessment based on learning standards, rather than its target of 50%. [33] It is nevertheless expected that the percentage of teachers using the formative assessment framework will increase in the following academic years as teachers grow more accustomed to new practices.

Under component 2, a regional framework for continuous teacher professional development was developed, which informed National Professional Development Plans that were then implemented. The program exceeded its target, training and certifying 67% of teachers rather than 50%.[34] Under component 3, a template was developed to support school leaders to report on key metrics related to curriculum delivery and learning in annual school improvement plans (SIP). By project closing, 195 primary schools had an MOE-approved SIP in place, surpassing the target for Intermediate Results Indicator 3, which tracked the number of primary schools with a SIP focused on teacher practice and student learning. [35] The program also included the development and implementation of a competency-based Professional Certification Program for Education Leaders, the development of an Education Leadership Handbook, and a job

[32] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 10.
[33] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 11.
[34] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 11.
[35] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 13.

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description and appraisal instrument for principals. As such, the percentage of school leaders reporting on progress of teacher practices and student learning to oversight bodies exceeded targets, reaching 87% as opposed to 50%.[36] Under component 4, the project carried out a needs-assessment on M&E capacity and supported Member States to develop National Monitoring Reports, meeting the target.[37]

Lessons learnt from the program include: 1) "Realistically assess implementation capacity at the project planning stage and include mitigating strategies to ensure effective implementation"- given that both the EDMU and Member States struggled with the additional workload from the project, which was relieved by recruiting Local Support Teams in the Member States; 2) "When Project components and activities are interrelated, consider consolidating procurement of consulting services" and; 3) "Consider and consult the end user when developing deliverables and timelines"- particularly teachers and trainers that had a challenging time keeping pace and assimilating all the changes.[38]

The proposed ESPIG program has paid close attention to lessons learnt and taken them into consideration in its design. The GA has taken specific measures to strengthen implementation capacity, including conducting a needs analysis at the country level to fill in any gaps prior to the start of implementation, recruiting a national Program Coordinator for each country and additional technical and administrative support to complement existing capacity within the EDMU. A procurement officer financed by the project will also help to ensure bulk procurement of goods and services across components wherever possible.

With regards to engaging relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries, the program is now supporting the participation of non-GPE Member States in the development of regional products such as the primary level curriculum and quality teaching frameworks, as well as data collection and reporting systems. Involving representatives from non-GPE Member States will help to increase ownership and uptake of products across the region, as it was previously noted that simply sharing outputs with non-GPE Member States was not effective to achieve the degree of harmonization desired. Ministries of Education will also consult more closely with all relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries, particularly education officers, teachers and school leaders to ensure greater communication and adapt program roll-out accordingly. A sustainability framework will also help to ensure gains from the initiative can be reached and are not lost once the program comes to an end. The framework incorporates elements of

[36] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 13.
[37] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 14.
[38] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 38-40.

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human resource management- ensuring that all stakeholders are actively engaged along the way; change and transition management- including advocacy and support; as well as financial management- to ensure relevant costs can be integrated into national budgets.

2.2 ESPIG DESCRIPTION

The requested grant amount of USD$ 10,000,000 is within the approved combined Maximum Country Allocation, which consists of USD$ 2.5 million from each of the four GPE Member States.

The program was developed to address some of the outstanding education challenges in the region and will support the implementation of the OESS 5-year implementation plan. Its over-arching objective is to improve learning outcomes and enhance equity of access to quality education services at the basic education cycle. The proposed activities strongly align with GPE's 3 strategic goals and are organized around four components. The main activities and expected outcomes are provided below.

1. Enhanced quality and equity of access to ECD and Special Education Needs (SEN) Services: This component aims to expand and improve pre-primary learning facilities by refurbishing and equipping underutilized spaces in primary schools to create pre-primary classrooms, developing a professional development program for ECE and conducting in-service training in child-center learning. The component also aims to improve services for SEN learners by conducting a national needs assessment on and developing an action plan to address any gaps; developing and providing professional training to teachers and practitioners who interact with children with SEN; supporting the incorporation of assistive tools for SEN in select education institutions; and undertaking a community awareness program on SEN.

2. Enhanced Curriculum and Assessment: This component aims to improve student success by implementing an enhanced primary school curriculum and strengthening teachers' capacity to deliver and assess it. This component builds on the need to modernize and harmonize a regional OECS curriculum, last reviewed in 2005. The program will first build local capacity for curriculum development by developing a course and training Curriculum and Education Officers in all nine OECS Member States. It will also conduct an evaluation of the existing curriculum and elaborate a roadmap for its development. This assessment and development will include a clear gender component considering the disparities observed, particularly for boys. Curriculum development will begin in year 2 with each Member State responsible for a different core subject and will include consultations with key stakeholders, expert review of draft documents, and digitization of the curriculum once complete. The program will also

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support the development and procurement of curriculum support materials, a repository of materials, and a one-year pilot of the curriculum in select schools. Lastly, the program will revise the early grade reading assessment and develop a similar one for mathematics to ensure comparability across Member States, as well as conduct a pilot and round of assessments.

3. Strengthened Leadership and Management: This component aims to improve quality and accountability of leadership and management, building on activities of the previous GPE-funded program, and devolving greater decision-making powers to schools through a school development planning process. Activities include the development of a Quality Teaching, Learning, and Leadership Framework to guide school leaders in their roles and responsibilities; continuous professional development for school leaders focused on school development planning and curriculum enhancement, which includes a mentoring component; and development and implementation of a harmonized continuous school improvement model, including monitoring and evaluation.

4. Program Management, Institutional Strengthening, Monitoring and Evaluation: This component aims to strengthen the capacity of the education system for program management, monitoring and evaluation, and communication with key stakeholders at regional and national levels. In addition to covering implementation support costs, this component will also develop a classroom observation tool, establish an automated education data system for providing regular information on student progress and related factors, and strengthen institutional capacity for its use. The MERL system, as it is known, will facilitate the collection of real-time data on teaching and learning to guide improvements at the school level and policy-making decisions. The program also aims to implement a regional and national change management strategy to support the implementation and sustainability of OESS initiatives.

2.2.1 Regional public goods and support to non-GPE Member States

In an effort to promote harmonization and integration across the region, the ESPIG will support the participation of all OECS Member States, both GPE and non-GPE, in the development of certain regional products. This approach is consistent with GPE's Regional ESPIG guidelines, which permits GPE Member States to consolidate their MCAs to support implementation of a regional ESP and to include countries that may not be eligible for GPE resources[39]. A key lesson

[39] According to GPE's Regional ESPIG guidelines, "SIDS can consolidate their MCAs into a total allocation to support the implementation of a regional ESP. This would include countries that may not be eligible for GPE resources. However, the regional ESP should make clear that resources and support will be fairly targeted towards those countries in the region that are least developed (poverty criteria), have lower education results (education vulnerability) and are in situations of fragility" (pg.3).

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learnt from the previous ESPIG and Mid-Term Review of the OESS is that all stakeholders must be involved in the development of regional public goods to ensure ownership across all Member States and uptake across the region.[40] For this reason, the proposed ESPIG will involve representatives of non-GPE Member States to adequately reflect their voices and perspectives in the final product.

The table below shows the different activities in the grant and highlights which activities include the participation of the five non-GPE Member States, as well as the funding amounts that will support their participation. Overall, US$ 843,190 or 8% of the grant amount will be used to support the participation of non-GPE Member States. These activities include a regional survey on special education, the development of a new harmonized curriculum and supporting materials, the development of early grade assessments for reading and numeracy, and participation at program review meetings. For all other activities, the EDMU will assist in mobilizing additional resources to support their implementation in non-GPE Member States.

Table A: ESPIG Activities by beneficiary

Activities and amount (US$)	GPE Member States (4)	Non-GPE Member States (5)	Regional
ECD – refurbish classrooms, teacher training	1,189,150	-	-
Special Education – disability survey	98,950	7,250	-
Special Education – teacher training, materials, awareness	584,120	-	-
New Curriculum – evaluation, development, support materials.	975,051	149,340	-
New Curriculum – pilot	823,480	-	-
Reading assessment – revise, pilot, administer	296,440	323,050	-
Numeracy assessment – develop, pilot, administer	296,440	323,050	-
School leadership – framework, training	802,700	-	-
School improvement model – develop, implement	889,295	-	-
Program management – national, regional	856,343	-	1,052,187
Program management – review meetings, progress reports, evaluations	289,260	40,500	-
M&E and ESPIG monitoring – training	59,740	-	-
EMIS and classroom observation tool – develop, implement	572,154	-	-

[40] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 15

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Change management	371,500	-	-
Total by beneficiary and percentage	**8,104,623 (81%)**	**843,190 (8%)**	**1,052,187 (11%)**
Total			**10,000,000 (100%)**

2.2.2 Program management and implementation arrangements

A project modality was selected for the program due to the regional nature of the grant and the fact that national budgeting cycles do not align across Member States. This decision was made by consensus ahead of the selection of the Grant Agent, in September 2019. Due to the nature of a regional submission, the traditional analysis on alignment with national systems was not conducted for this review. Nevertheless, the program is fully aligned with regional systems and seeks alignment with national systems as much as possible.

This is the first ESPIG for which the OECS will be a GA. The OECS was approved as a GA in February 2020, through the accreditation process that further strengthened regional systems that will be used for implementation of the ESPIG. It is important to note that the subsequent transfer of funds to the GA is contingent on progress in addressing the findings of the institutional capacity assessment. There are three pending actions within the OECS institutional strengthening action plan due between June 2021 and June 2022. Two priority actions from the Strengthening Action Plan were completed in March 2021, namely: The implementation of mechanisms for the public to report to OECS any case of misuse of funds or any case of sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH). These two actions were completed in line with the timeline proposed in the action plan. The Secretariat will continue to monitor progress of the pending actions within the OECS institutional strengthening action plan.

In terms of implementation arrangements, the OECS Commission will lead the implementation of regional level activities through the Grants Management Office and the Education Development Management Unit. Implementation at the national level will leverage established national systems in the 4 GPE Member States, with technical and fiduciary aspects managed by the Planning Units within the Ministry of Education with support from the Ministry of Finance. National teams will be established in each of the 4 countries, led by a dedicated Project Manager based within the Ministry, who will be a link to the regional level as well as local stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The GA's implementation support costs are clearly articulated within the program budget and in line with project requirements, past lessons learnt, and areas of opportunity highlighted under the GA review. At the regional level, support costs will cover a project manager, two

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technical specialists, a procurement officer, administrative support and equipment for the program (US$ 1,007,187). These elements will strengthen the project's implementation capacity and support smooth and timely implementation. At the national level, the program will cover the costs of a National Project Coordinator in each of the 4 countries as well as administrative support and equipment. Country operational costs add up to US$ 214,000 per country, or US$ 856,000 total.

Taken together, program management costs are high at US$1.8 million, especially when considering an agency fee of 7%. Nevertheless, these costs were carefully considered and deemed justified in this context. Upon the Secretariat's request, the GA provided a detailed breakdown and description of its direct and indirect costs for program implementation. The Secretariat carefully examined costs to ensure there was no duplication between the agency fee and program management costs, or between regional and national level expenditures. The Secretariat found that the agency fee already incorporated costs that are often classified as direct costs in other grants, and that staffing positions requested at the regional and national level (such as procurement, accounting, administration support) and level of effort required were evidence-based and without duplication. Given that each of the 4 GPE countries in the ESPIG have different national systems for procurement and accounting, different budget cycles, different policies at different levels of implementation, there is a high transaction cost in working with and coordinating across all four countries. Lessons learnt from previous programs, where implementation was stalled due to lack of capacity, has informed the GA's estimations of effort required to implement the proposed ESPIG successfully.

Given that funds will support regional systems and products within a regional plan for which the GA has an institutional mandate to lead and coordinate implementation, the Secretariat has taken due care to consider the nature of regional activities to ensure costs are justified and grant funds bring maximum benefit to the most vulnerable children in the 4 GPE Member States. The GA will be requested to obtain prior approval from the Secretariat for any reallocation of funds away from the national level to the regional level.

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Table B: ESPIG Components and Costs

	GPE Financing US$	% of total GPE
Total MCA	10 Million	100%
Fixed Part		
Program Component*		
Component 1: Enhanced quality and equity of access to ECD and special education needs (SEN) services	**1,879,470**	**18.8%**
1.1: Early Childhood Education	1,189,150	11.9%
1.2: Improved availability of services for vulnerable children with Special Education Needs (SEN)	690,320	6.9%
Component 2: Curriculum and Assessment	**3,186,851**	**31.9%**
2.1: Improved capacity to develop and implement school curriculum	314,000	3.1%
2.2: More Relevant OECS Harmonized Primary Curriculum (OHPC) and Standard Key Stage Assessment	1,633,871	16.3%
2.3: Improved Key Stage Assessment in Reading and Mathematics	1,238,980	12.4%
Component 3: Strengthened Leadership and Management	**1,691,995**	**16.9%**
3.1: Enhanced Capacity of Education Leaders to Support Learning	802,700	8.0%
3.2: Strengthened School Improvement Planning and Implementation	853,295	8.5%
3.3: Communication	36,000	0.4%
Component 4: Program Management; Teaching and learning data systems and tools; Monitoring and Evaluation	***3,241,683***	**32.4%**
4.1: Program Management *Including Grant Agent's implementation support costs of 1,007,187 (10% of total budget).*	*1,863,530*	18.6%
4.2: ESPIG Monitoring and Evaluation	*374,760*	3.7%
4.3: Training on monitoring and learning framework, teaching and learning data system, classroom observation tool	*1,003,394*	10.0%
GRAND TOTAL (with Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs)	***10,000,000***	**100%**
Agency Fees**	700,000	7%

* Percentages may not add due to rounding

** Agency Fee is not included in the MCA and is calculated as percentage rate (agreed with each GA) from the total.

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3 RECOMMENDED DECISION

Given the context of the Caribbean region, the Secretariat finds that the proposed grant application is relevant in the region's context and well-aligned with the regional sector plan and implementation plan. The Secretariat considers that the three funding model requirements are met and recommends the approval of the regional ESPIG.

The proposal is recommended to the CEO to approve with the following Observations, Report Backs, and/or Conditions:

Observation	• The Secretariat would like to commend the OECS Commission, the Member States, and all the partners for developing a strong regional program with a clear vision and direction for both the regional and national level. The effort, reflection, and collaboration between the regional body and Member States is particularly recognized.
Report-back	• Report-back on annual figures of domestic financing for the education sector as data becomes available. • Report-back on all baselines and targets in the Results Framework in the first annual report. • Report-back on the targeting criteria that will be used to select vulnerable communities that will benefit from refurbished ECD classrooms in the first annual report.
Condition	• Transfer of funds are conditional on OECS satisfactorily addressing outstanding actions stemming from the accreditation process, captured within the institutional strengthening action plan. • Secretariat prior approval is required for any re-allocation of grant funds from the national level to the regional level.

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Annex 1: Assessment of the funding model requirements

The table below provides a summary of the extent to which the OECS Member States have met the Funding Model requirements Adaptations to the Funding Model requirements that are applied to regional ESPIGs are also summarized below. These have been drawn from the Guidelines for Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grants.

Requirement	Observations	Requirement Met (Yes/No)
Total allocation	*From Regional ESPIG Guidelines: SIDS can consolidate their MCAs into a total allocation to support the implementation of a regional ESP. This would include countries that may not be eligible for GPE resources. Flexibility is left for the GPE-eligible countries to decide whether to fully pool their resources under the regional ESP or earmark them country-by-country. However, the regional ESP should make clear that resources and support will be fairly targeted towards those countries in the region that are least developed (poverty criteria), have lower education results (education vulnerability), and are in situations of fragility.*	
Requirement 1: A credible, endorsed Education Sector Plan (ESP), or alternatively, a Transitional Education Plan (TEP)	*From Regional ESPIG Guidelines: Full ESA is not required if regional ESP is evidence-based. Regional ESP does not have to cover all education subsectors or thematic areas within a subsector, instead it can be tailored according to context. An independent appraisal is not required, but it is sufficient for it to be appraised by development partners in the regional education group in a simplified manner.* • The OESS was originally approved in May 2011. It was appraised and endorsed by development partners in 2016.	**Yes**

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	• Following the 2019 Mid-Term Review (MTR), the OESS was extended for an additional five years and is being operationalized by a revised implementation plan 2021-2026, which was endorsed by development partners in July 2020. • The OESS sets out a vision that every learner succeeds and identifies seven strategic imperatives towards this end. These are: 1) quality and accountability of leadership and management, 2) teachers' professional development, 3) quality of teaching and learning, 4) curriculum and strategies for assessment, 5) access to quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) services, 6) technical and vocational education opportunities, and 7) the provision of tertiary and continuing education. ***The Secretariat deems that Requirement 1 is met.***	
Requirement 2: Evidence of commitment to ESP or TEP and its financing.	*From Regional ESPIG Guidelines: Instead of compliance with GPE domestic financing benchmarks, regional ESPs should provide a clear financing framework that reflects resources devoted to the education sector by regional organizations, development partners, and/or GPE member states. Percentage of total government expenditures and percentage of recurrent government expenditures (excluding debt service) allocated to education in each of the GPE member states should still be provided.* • The OESS provides a financing framework in the revised implementation plan 2021-2026. The total cost of the five-year plan comes to USD$ 43,741,250 and will be financed through contributions of development partners and Member States. Allocations from national budgets to implement country level activities is secured on an annual basis. The financing framework also maps the contributions of development partners to each activity. • The table below presents figures on government expenditure allocated to education submitted by the four GPE Member States. Due to annual budgeting procedures, missing projections for 2022 and 2023 will become available next year, likely between February and March 2021. While analyzing the	**Yes**

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table, it is important to consider that the 20% benchmark is not applicable as a requirement for regional applications.

Education expenditures as a percentage of total public expenditures (recurrent and capital)[41]

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GRU	16.1%	17.6%	16.4%	15.3%	15.6%	16.1%	*
SLU	16.7%	16.6%	15.8%	16.1%	16.2%	*	*
SVG	18.0%	19.0%	17.0%	15.9%	15.5%	14.3%	*
DOM	10.3%	9.5%	9.9%	9.9%	8.1%	9.3%	11.1%

Recurrent education expenditures as a percentage of recurrent public expenditures

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GRU	19.0%	20.5%	18.5%	18.5%	18.2%	18.1%	*
SLU	20.5%	19.2%	18.3%	18.3%	18.8%	*	*
SVG	21.0%	21.2%	20.2%	20.2%	20.0%	20.2%	*
DOM	14.5%	12.4%	14.6%	14.6%	12.3%	15.1%	14.7%

- In terms of government expenditures allocated to education, the 4 GPE Member States are not reaching the 20% benchmark, nor do they present an increasing trend. Nevertheless, a short policy brief on Public Education Spending prepared by the OECS and shared with development partners highlights that Member States are maintaining the education's nominal share of the national budget, even though it appears that expenditures are not necessarily increasing the sector's percentage share.[42] The total recurrent education expenditure has remained relatively stable over the period 2017-2023 despite marginal declines in percentage share. This trend is consistent with data which shows that class sizes across all levels and teacher/pupil ratios are well within international standards. Furthermore, as percentage of GDP, the OECS countries have spent on

[41] Missing figures for 2022 and 2023 will only be available after discussions for the next fiscal year take place, following annual budgeting procedures. This information is likely to be available between February and March 2021.
[42] OECS (2020). Public Education Spend in Selected OECS Member States: Trends and Justifications. Unpublished policy brief.

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	average 4.0% over the past five years on the education sector, which compares quite favorably with other countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region. • The policy brief also mentions that the degrees of freedom to increase resources to education is limited, particularly as OECS countries are in a constant state of rebuilding following natural disasters. Research has shown that on average OECS countries are exposed to a major natural disaster once every two years. An example was Hurricane Maria, which in 2017 caused damages in excess of 200% of GDP in Dominica.[43] The onset of climate change also demands increasingly greater resources for disaster risk preparedness and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have placed an additional burden on an already limited fiscal space. ***The Secretariat deems that Requirement 2 is met, based on the regional ESPIG guidelines, and invites Member States to provide the missing financial data once it becomes available in 2021.***	
Requirement 3: Adequacy of Data	<u>From Regional ESPIG Guidelines</u>: *Availability of data focuses on the regional ESP and regional ESA instead of on individual countries. However, data should be provided, for each GPE grant eligible country, on the types of learning assessments used and years carried out, as well as plans for future assessments, frequency, and intended uses.* • The OESS is informed by several studies, including an ESA conducted in 2011. The extension of the regional plan and the development of the five-year implementation plan (2021-2026) has also been informed by a comprehensive MTR, which assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the OESS. • The region has established some processes for data management and reporting, but further strengthening is needed. A regional database is in place, which covers key indicators linked to performance, financing, and system capacity that are disaggregated by gender. Data is used to produce a regional digest and regional implementation reports annually. Nevertheless, the MTR	**Yes**

[43] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 8.

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	highlighted critical weaknesses in the reporting of OESS performance indicators. Only 53% of targets within the OESS were reported on by Member States, limiting the capacity to measure progress and fully draw conclusions. As part of the ESPDG, the OECS Commission is developing a Data Governance and Management Framework to assess the need/infrastructure/processes currently employed by Member States and guide improvements. A task force was established to reflect on the outcomes of the framework and define a data strategy for the region. • National examinations, which are taken by all students, are conducted annually and are used to monitor learning at the school level. The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) works with Member States to administer these large-scale examinations within the region, analyze statistics and issue results. These examinations include the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA) at the end of Grade 6, the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC), and the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). In addition, Member States conduct learning assessments at the 2nd and 4th grade, covering math and language. These assessments are conducted by the examinations and assessments unit within the respective Ministries and are meant to be diagnostic in nature. Results are shared back with the school for appropriate remedial action if required. • All four GPE Member States report to UIS annually on access and participation from pre-primary to secondary as well as teacher quality, internal efficiency, education financing, and system output indicators. In 2017, three of the four Member States met the GPE criteria of reporting at least 10 out of the 12 key indicators (SLU: 12, GRN: 12, SVG: 10, DOM: 7). ***The Secretariat deems that Requirement 3 is met.***	

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Annex 2: Assessment of Program

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Observations	Standard Met (Yes/No)
1. Program Design	Program addresses critical evidence-based challenge(s) identified in the education sector analysis	**This standard is met.** The proposed OECS Education Sector Support Program addresses critical challenges identified in the Medium Term Review (serving as the education sector analysis), these include: (i) uneven access to early education, particularly pre-primary education; (ii) inadequate provision of education services for children with special education needs (SEN), (iii) a need for improved teacher quality particularly for ECD and SEN practitioners (iv) lack of relevance of the curriculum (which is considered out of date and not meeting the needs of students); (v) mixed results in terms of student achievement/performance; (vi) need for improved human resources and capacity and (vii) data related constraints across the national and regional levels, as well as poor systematic data collection (pp. 9 – 12). The program document (PD) submitted by OECS is for a regional ESPIG for US$10 million. The multi-country program will support the implementation of a regional education sector plan based on a common framework for educational development in the region, with ESPIG funds also available to support the development of regional public goods, including the participation	**Yes**

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		of non-GPE Member States, in line with the Guidelines for Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grants (ESPIGs). The PD takes a strong regional approach and a focus on the development of public goods that will be used by member and non-member states as the case of regionalism in the Caribbean is strong given the small size of member states and at times limited capacity, therefore allowing countries to leverage economies of scale and joint capacity. A regional approach will also allow for the development of regional public goods, and the use of common institutional infrastructure, technical assistance, and cooperation. In addition, the PD will leverage the experience and expertise of other islands, compensates for small capacity extended ministries, and aim to accelerate the pace of development. The regional approach is consistent with GPE's Regional ESPIG guidelines, which permits GPE Member States to consolidate their MCAs to support implementation of a regional ESP and to allow countries that may not be eligible for GPE resources to benefit from public goods and knowledge produced by others. A key lesson learnt from the previous ESPIG and Mid-Term Review of the last plan, is that all stakeholders must be involved in the development of regional public goods to ensure ownership across all Member States and uptake across the region. Therefore, the proposed ESPIG will involve representatives of non-GPE Member States ensuring their participation and inputs in the final product. Regional public goods will ultimately be available to benefit non-member states but will not be implemented with ESPIG financing in line with the Guidelines for Regional ESPIGs. The proposed program aims to address the key challenges cited above through the following components and interventions: - *Component 1: Enhanced quality and equity of access to ECD and Special Education Needs (SEN) services* aims to expand access to pre-	

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		primary classrooms and improve the availability of education services for children with special needs. The interventions will also improve staff capacity (both in terms of teacher training for those working with children with special needs and for ECD practitioners) and aims to improve the children's learning environments (pp. 23-33). Lastly, the component will also respond to the lack of data particular regarding children with special needs by undertaking disability survey (p. 32-33). - *Component 2 – Enhanced Curriculum and Assessment* aims to respond to the need for a more relevant curriculum by implementing an enhanced centralized primary school curriculum and to strengthen teachers' capacity to deliver and assess it. The component will support revision of the existing OECS Harmonized Curriculum (OHPC), enabling Member States to collaborate on it while tailoring it to the needs of each country. This will be achieved through trainings in curriculum and assessment to develop local capacity, undertaking an evaluation of the current OHPC curriculum with active stakeholder engagement, and the development of a new/revised OHPC, which will be piloted by the program. In addition, the component will also revise and pilot OECS' early grade reading assessment and develop an early grade math assessment. - *Component 3*: *Strengthened Leadership and Management* responds to the need for improved student achievement and a need for improved human resources/staff capacity. The component aims to" enhance educational leadership and management competencies and processes for improving classroom instruction and student achievement" by improving the ability of principals and other education leaders to more effectively manage and administer the learning environment through the development of a Quality Teaching, Learning and Leadership Framework (QTLLF) and by supporting continuous professional development. The component will also	

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		support improved school improvement planning process by developing a school improvement model (p. 40-48). - Component 4 – Program Management, Institutional Strengthening, Monitoring and Evaluation, which responds to the need to strengthen institutional capacity for program management as well as capacity to monitor, evaluate and collect data. The component will also support putting personnel in place for program management at the level of OECS and in the Member States, as well as strengthening data reporting mechanisms (e.g., Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting and Learning [MERL] (pp. 50-52). The PD draws on lessons learned from the last program. According to the ICR, lessons learned include the need to ensure: (i) Assessment of implementation capacity at the project planning stage and mitigating strategies to ensure effective implementation; (ii) For project components and activities that are interrelated, considering consolidating procurement of consulting services and; (iii) Considering and consulting "the end user when developing deliverables and timelines"- particularly teachers and trainers. This has been particularly addressed in the current PD with a strong focus of involvement of key stakeholders including teachers and education specialists and administrators for example in the proposed revision of the OHPC curriculum. The program design and structure described in the PD is clearly informed by the challenges and lessons learned from the past program. Taking from the lessons learned, the PD has sought to strengthen implementation capacity, given that in past programs implementation was stalled due to lack of capacity. This has been taken into careful consideration with the GA's estimations of efforts to implement the program successfully based on a needs analysis at the country level to fill in any existing capacity gaps prior to the start of implementation. The PD will also mitigate capacity gaps by	

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		employing a more coordinated approach- ensuring dedicated personnel at national and regional levels, in particular through the recruitment of a national Program Coordinator for each country and additional technical and administrative support to complement existing capacity within the EDMU. A procurement officer financed by the project will also help to ensure bulk procurement of goods and services across components wherever possible. A notable point of this program's strengthened design is its transversal approach to program implementation, with initiatives spanning the regional, national, district, and school levels. The approach includes the development of regional public goods (as previously noted), specifically: 1. Revised OECS Harmonized Curriculum, including its piloting, 2. Revised OECS' early grade reading assessment, 3. New OECS' early grade mathematics assessment and 4. Regional learning assessment report based on the new assessment tools. The development of these regional public goods will leverage regional capacity for improved curriculum development and will set a common toolkit for the assessment of learning achievements. This will benefit the four GPE member states by improving future regional coordination, easier implementation of regional initiatives on curriculum and learning, and will provide comparable information on learning across the region. The development of these public goods will involve the participation of non-GPE member states to ensure regional alignment and coordination, with 8% of the program's budget (US$843,190) allocated to supporting the development of the aforementioned public goods for the 5 non-GPE member states (in line with regional ESPIG guidelines).	
	Program has a logical and evidence-based results chain	**This sub-standard is met.** As noted above, the program document's detailed description of its key challenges, past experience, lessons learned, and the proposed interventions, present a coherent and logical, results chain and theory of change, as well as reflecting the program's strong case for its regional	**Yes**

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	between interventions, outputs and outcomes	approach, given the Caribbean states proximity, commonalities and shared constraints. The program document presents a clear results chain and theory of change, linking the proposed activities, outputs and intermediate outcomes. For instance, the rehabilitation of ECD learning facilities (p. 29), provision of in-service and pre-service training for ECD and SEN teachers (pp. 30. 33), conduct of national child disability and special needs survey (pp. 32-33), and implementation of special needs awareness programs at the community level address underlying causes of challenge and contribute to improving ECD and SEN services (p. 33). Similarly, training in curriculum and assessment (p. 35), evaluation of existing curriculum and assessment modalities, the development and piloting of new ones (pp. 36-37, 39-40) and procurement of curriculum support materials (pp. 37-38), all demonstrate a clear link to supporting improvements in curriculum and assessment at all levels of education, leading to improvements in learning. The program document also justifies the development of several regional public goods, which will support improved coordination and consistency in regional initiatives. This includes the evaluation of existing curriculum and assessment modalities, and the development and piloting of new ones.	
	GPE's strategic goals and objectives are adequately reflected	**This standard is met.** The PD is aligned with GPE's strategic goals, given its focus on: - Learning through the programs focus on enhancing quality of learning through curricular, teacher, and school leader development initiatives (Component 2 and Component 3); - Equity through improving and ensuring equitable access to pre-primary and basic education by expanding pre-primary services and	Yes

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		reinforcing provision of SEN (Component 1). Furthermore, the PD proposes activities that directly address educational disparities experienced by vulnerable populations (see pp. 32-33). It is important to mention that interventions covering Special Education Needs (SEN) include not only disabilities, but also other special needs arising from marginalization /disadvantage (see p. 24). - Efficiency through improving the performance of the education system via capacity-building targeted at both central education administrators and actors at decentralized educational units, all the way down to the school level including a strong focus on monitoring and evaluation (Component 3 and Component 4). Existing programs implemented with development partners across different OECS countries are in line with GPE's strategic goals and summarized in Table 3 (pp. 18-21). The table provides information on the implementing partner agency, grant amount, and implementation period. The program's activities are well described and provide robust details regarding the selection of beneficiaries. The program proposes pre-primary to Grade 6 students and teachers as direct program beneficiaries; totaling 24,255 students and 1,600 teachers in government and government-assisted primary schools (see pp. 59-60). The PD states that "schools, teachers and students who have been determined to be especially at risk, marginalized and vulnerable will be specifically targeted" (p. 60). However, in the case of Sub-component 1.1 intervention (i), which aims "to increase the enrolment of pre-primary aged students, *especially those in deprived communities…* through the provision of 20 refurbished pre-primary and/or primary classrooms through the renovation of space in primary school infrastructure that is available due to lower primary	

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		enrolments…", it will be important to further explain the criteria/methodology to be used across the four GPE member countries, for identifying the "deprived communities" where the 20 pre-primary classrooms will be placed across (p. 29) (*see report-back*) Although the PD notes that at the primary and secondary levels "gender parity has been achieved in many of the territories" (p. 11), the PD also notes that net enrolment rates are higher for girls than boys. For example at the secondary level, in Saint Lucia net enrolment rates for girls are 85.8 percent while for boys they are 82.6 percent. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the rates are 84.8 for boys and 86.9 for girls. In Dominica and Grenada, net enrolment rates are as follows: 66.6 percent boys and 73.5 percent for girls in Dominica; 102.7 percent boys and 110.5 percent girls in Grenada. Although this program mainly focuses on pre-primary and primary, in recognition of these disparities within the system, the program's component on curriculum assessment and development (Component 2) will include a clear gender component considering the disparities observed in the level of access, particularly for boys.	
	Private Sector Engagement Strategy	**This standard is met.** The program is in compliance with GPE's Private Sector Engagement Strategy, given that it will only fund government and government assisted primary schools. Government assisted schools are public educational institutions built by the church but are operated and owned by the government. Evidence of the regulatory oversight includes government payment of salaries, maintenance and all operational costs for government assisted schools. Further, the PD does not mention any support to for-profit providers of educations services or support to not-for-profit providers of education services. In addition, for the intervention focusing on refurbishing/establishing 20 pre-primary classrooms under sub-component 1.1 (major activities, para 6.24, p. 29) to improve quality	**Yes**

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		and access, the PD clearly states that no grant resources will be allocated towards the improvement of privately owned pre-primary educational facilities. The PD also provides a detailed overview of the ongoing development and strengthening of the pre-primary sectors legislative and governance frameworks (policies, standards and regulations in the four GPE member states – Table 4, p. 26). Pre-primary regulatory frameworks are being put in place in the four OECS GPE Member countries to ensure the quality of early childhood care and education in both public and private institutions. The PD further notes that "the regulatory frameworks legislation embodies the responsibilities and quality requirements that are mandatory for the management of the early childhood sector…. which include: 1) legislation that provides for matters such as registration, licensing and compliance with standards; 2) standards that address the quality of service provided by practitioners and form the basis for regulation and; 3) the provisions for monitoring compliance and imposing appropriate sanctions." (p. 25) In addition, the PD will support the development of a common framework to be adopted across the OECS States. The framework will aim "to determine what comprises quality teaching, learning and leadership at all levels of education and will serve as a basis for the regional Quality Teaching, Learning and Leadership Framework" (see pp. 43, 59, 82-84).	
2. Program Budget	Program cost is justified	**This standard is met.** The PD is accompanied by a detailed program budget as a separate excel file. The detailed budget is structured per component, sub-component, and activity. The program budget's activities are aligned with those proposed in the PD and with the overall program design.	**Yes**

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		The budget also outlines Program Management Costs of USD 1.8M, which allocates USD 1M for GA support costs at the regional level and USD 0.8M for coordination costs at the country level. While these costs appear high, they have been sufficiently explained and justified by additional information provided by the GA including rationale for staff costs at both regional and national levels. Moreover, a detailed breakdown of the agency fee for the GPE grant has been provided and shows total indirect costs at 9% but this will be capped at 7% based on GPE's Board decision. There is no duplication of costs between agency fees and program management costs. The PD provides an annual breakdown of the costs (Table 9, p. 80), year-on-year budget projections per component (Table 10, p. 80), and total budget estimates per expenditure category (Table 11, pp. 80-81). Table 12 (p. 81) also summarizes timeline for disbursements by implementation year and by calendar year. In the accompanying budget spreadsheet, the PD provides further detail regarding: (a) activities and sub-activities that will be implemented per program component; (b) units to be procured, unit costs, unit quantities, and corresponding total costs; and (c) implementation timelines. In addition, budget includes notes and rationale further describing unit costs for major activities (I.e. Classrooms refurbish and classrooms furniture). The program is fully funded by GPE, and requested funding is fully allocated and accounted for with no contingency funds.	
	Calculations are correct and within approved allocation ceilings	**This standard is met.** Calculations are correct and within approved allocation ceilings.	**Yes**

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3. M&E	M&E framework comprised of a strategy and methods to ensure accountability for achievements	**This standard is met.** The PD's M&E framework is aligned with the OESS and the 2020-2026 implementation plan. The M&E framework is coherent and notes links with several other frameworks, such as the Quality Teaching and Learning and Leadership Framework (QTLLF), which will set delivery standards for educational provision within the OECS. The PD also clearly describes M&E activities and their proposed frequency, namely quarterly and biannual progress reports and mid-term and final program evaluation reports (see pp. 49-52). Budget allocations have been correspondingly assigned to the production of said M&E outputs. The PD also provides information on the institutional actors responsible for their production. Third-party evaluators, in close consultation with stakeholders within the education system, will be brought in to conduct mid-term and final evaluations, which will allow examination of the program's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. A Regional Education Group (REG) shall be constituted to monitor project performance and overall strategic direction (see p. 61). The REG shall be comprised of representatives from each participant country. A Program Implementation Advisory Committee (PIAC) will be responsible for bi-annual project review meetings. To ensure successful execution of these mechanisms, the PD also allocates a budget towards strengthening institutional M&E capacities. Overall, the PD's M&E framework clearly lays out, M&E roles, responsibilities, and modalities. The detailed description of the current oversight structures and mechanisms are noted by the PD as a clear improvement over past OESS frameworks. Another significant improvement is the results focus of the PD,	**Yes**

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		which now seeks to report on and measure outcomes, as compared to the OESS' mechanism, which focused more on inputs and activities.	
	Results Framework is robust and covers all interventions	**This standard is met.** The theory of change clearly illustrates the relationship between the PD's target outputs and outcomes and the desired impact of the OESS. The PD's theory of change incorporates the strengthening of infrastructure, human resources, and institutional capacities; this builds on the challenges and lessons learned from previous OESS implementation, which identified capacity in the aforementioned areas as critical to achieving the OESS target outcome and desired impact. This is an improvement on the OESS, which does not directly lay out a theory of change. The results framework provides baseline values and corresponding yearly targets only for some impact indicators. Targets and baseline values remain to be determined for most other impact indicators (see pp. 86-93). For instance, gender-disaggregated indicators do not have baseline and target values yet. It is expected, however, that baselines and targets will be available by the start of the program implementation. That said, the results framework clearly indicates the corresponding data sources, frequency of data collection, and the units responsible for collecting data. Furthermore, where targets have been declared, the output and outcome indicators are SMART. In addition, the proposed indicators directly correspond with the activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact communicated in the PD's broader theory of change. The results framework can be found in pp. 86-93. The PD notes that the program's proposed interventions will benefit teachers and pre-primary to sixth grade students in public and government-assisted	**Yes**

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		schools within the OECS' GPE member countries and as previously noted states that a total of 24,255 students and 1,600 teachers will benefit directly from its proposed interventions, with most beneficiary targets included in the Results Framework (except for those indicators still to be populated – reading TBD).	
4. Implementation Arrangements and Readiness	Implementation arrangements are appropriate	**This standard is met.** The OECS Commission serves as the grant agent (GA), and will implement regional level activities, providing support for coordination, procurement, financial management, and auditing through the Grants Management Office and the Education Development Management Unit. The Commission will also organize a monthly meeting with the Project Managers of each of the 4 GPE Member States. Grant agent implementation support costs are clearly detailed (as noted under the program budget standard) will provide resources for the aforementioned activities in order to reinforce implementation and coordination. National implementation will leverage established national systems, with technical and fiduciary aspects managed by the MoE through their Planning Units and support from MoF. National teams will be established in each of the 4 countries and will work closely with all relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries. The PD adequately details fiduciary management responsibilities, including responsible actors and processes at the regional and national levels, as well as their corresponding roles. The OECS Commission's fiduciary team shall be primarily responsible for financial management. The flow of funds arrangements are also well described and note that the GA will disburse funds to the Member States and deposit funds into a special account to support activities at the national level.	**Yes**

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		Procurement and auditing arrangements are also adequately detailed. The OECS EDMU shall be responsible for pooled procurement and shall work with procurement officers in each country. Auditing will be undertaken by an independent auditor who will be recruited by the GA. In sum, the PD provides detailed information regarding implementation arrangements, which are anchored on both regional and national mechanisms.	
	Program is ready to be implemented	**This standard is met.** The program is ready to be implemented. Needs assessments and trainings will be completed prior to the start date- including on implementation capacity at national level. An Operations Manual will also be finalized by March 31, 2021 and baselines and targets will be completed by May 2021. The PD lays out a clear implementation calendar, with corresponding annual milestones. As previously noted, the program's implementation will rely on existing regional and national systems. Overall, the fiduciary and administrative arrangements described previously will allow for fund disbursement by the proposed program start date. It is important to note that the Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) decision made the subsequent transfer of funds to OECS subject to the Secretariat's assessment of satisfactory progress regarding implementation by OECS of the actions identified in the action plan including (1) implementation of mechanisms for anyone to report on the misuse of funds to OECS, (2) the development of publicly available reporting mechanisms for sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH), (3) development of procurement manual, (4) project appraisal, and (5) finance manual. Thus far,	**Yes**

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		OECS has complied with addressing the implementation of mechanisms for anyone to report on the misuse of funds and the development of publicly available reporting mechanisms for sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH) within the proposed timeline (March2021). The Secretariat will continue to monitor progress of the three pending actions within the OECS institutional strengthening action plan.	
5. Risk(s) Identification and Mitigation Measures	Program includes appropriate risks matrix	**This standard is met.** The PD includes a detailed risk management matrix that identifies and organizes risk according to their likelihood of occurrence and potential impact (see Table 8, pp. 71-76). Risks identified have been categorized as: • operational risks (e.g. limited institutional and human resource capacity, differing Member State priorities, limited data availability); • financial risks (e.g. limited funding due to impact of COVID-19, limited budgetary allocation by Member States, resource mismanagement, inflation); • political risks (e.g. changes in government); and • environmental risks (e.g. natural disasters, COVID-19). The risks identified align with the challenges faced in previous OESS implementation, which was hampered by inadequate institutional and human resource capacities, inadequate data reporting, insufficient resources, and delays due to recruitment of employees and procurement of materials (see Criterion 1: Program Design of this annex for a more detailed explanation). The risk management matrix proposes mitigation strategies for each risk identified. Limited human resource and organizational capacity is identified as a medium-likelihood, medium-impact risk, and shall be addressed through institutional capacity-building strategies.	**Yes**

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		The risk matrix also adequately assesses context-appropriate risks related to financial management, procurement, and funds mismanagement at the State level. Financial management mitigation measures proposed include regular monitoring project budget for variations, spot checks, internal audit and independent audits. Lastly, the Secretariat also identified the status of the GA as a partial beneficiary of the grant an additional risk and potential conflict of interest, given the GA will benefit from the funds that will support regional systems and products. There are three key mitigation measures which have been considered to allay this risk. First, has been the careful consideration of the alignment between the objectives of the ESPIG and OECS' institutional mandate to lead on the strengthening/development of regional systems and public goods. A second mitigation measure has been the Secretariat's review of activities financed as part of the ESPIG's implementation support cost and agency fees to ensure: (i) No duplication between regional and national-level activities; (ii) No duplication of activities financed by the implementation support cost and the agency fee; and (iii) That regional costs are justified, including the procurement, admin, and accounting support that will be enlisted. The Secretariat found no duplication and that regional and national costs are justified by the relatively high transaction costs of operating in a multi-country system, which requires additional management and coordination efforts. Third, the Secretariat with partners plans to take an active role in monitoring the grant once implementation begins.	
	If any SEAH risks are identified, appropriate	**This standard is met.**	**Yes**

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	mitigation measures are included	The application package/program document and QAR process did not raise any concerns regarding Gender Based Violence (GBV) or Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH). As part of the Secretariat's institutional capacity assessment, OECS' existing SEAH safeguarding policy and whistleblowing mechanisms were initially found to be incomplete. A copy of the policy was originally submitted to the Secretariat on 17 February 2020 following approval by the OECS Authority on February 14, 2020. OECS has since strengthened its SEAH safeguarding policy and procedures and included adequate whistle blowing reporting mechanisms (also see "Program is ready to be implemented" standard). As of March 2021, the revised draft policy had been prepared and was being reviewed by internal partners as well as a gender specialist. A copy of the revised policy is expected to be shared with the Secretariat. The Commission has noted that the revised "policy incorporates and/or cross references related aspects of the OECS Gender Policy and Manual, which was recently finalized and approved…. SEAH is dealt with under Principle 2 - Nondiscrimination, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence in the workplace. The SEAH policy addresses the important matters of protection of staff and program beneficiaries from all forms of SEAH and protection of whistleblowers." In addition, the Commission has also developed a whistleblower reporting form which is already accessible on the organization's website: https://www.oecs.org/en/contact-us. The Commission plans to formally roll out the revised policy between April and June 2021.	
6. Sustainability	Program has been designed to be sustainable	**This standard is met.** The PD's sustainability framework revolves around three axes: human resource	**Yes**

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		management, financial management, and change management (see p. 77). The human resource management axis focuses on building capacity to ensure that individuals involved in implementation shall be able to sustain the gains of the project even after its completion. Change management strategies consist mostly of advocacy initiatives that convey the need for change. The PD's focus on obtaining buy-in across different levels of the education system reflects this. In terms of financial sustainability, the PD proposes that the program budget be incorporated into the Ministry of Education budget of member countries. This will ensure that the new systems established through the program receive financial support beyond program completion. This is a clear improvement on the OESS, which did not give much attention to change management strategies in this area – a key challenge encountered during previous OESS implementation.	
7. Aid Effectiveness	Program is aligned with the main criteria of aid effectiveness	**This standard is met.** The activities described in the PD are well aligned with the OESS' strategic priorities. Although a project modality has been selected given the regional nature of the grant, the project's implementation arrangements will make use of existing regional systems/mechanisms to the extent possible. The use of regional systems is notably exemplified through the decision to have the OECS itself serve as the GA. The regional ESPIG will use the procurement, accounting, audit, and reporting systems of the regional institution to support the project, as well as make use of national systems for activities implemented at the national level. Regional systems shall help to ensure consistent service and product delivery at national level.	**Yes**

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		Furthermore, the development of a Regional Education Group (REG) will support implementation and monitoring of the program and will include the participation from each of the GPE Member States, NGOs, Caribbean Union of Teachers, regional and development partners. In addition to reviewing program performance, the REG will play a role in coordinating knowledge transfer and resolving implementation bottlenecks. The program has secured endorsement from participating countries, as well as the OECS' development partners.	

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