System Capacity Grant Annual Progress Report Template

Status: Accepted

Country	Grant ID	Grant Agent	Grant Effectiveness/Start Date
Samoa	GPE0000966	SCG	10/02/2023

Grant Amount	Timeframe Examined in this Report		Date of Report Submission
999,999 (USD)	From Date	To Date	03/05/2026
	10/01/2024	10/01/2025	

Area(s) and activity group(s) covered by grant

Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact

- System diagnostics, compact development and education sector analyses
- Gender-responsive sector planning, including operational planning and budgeting
- Supporting policies and plans to identify and address multiple forms of exclusion (planning for children with disabilities, system resilience and inclusion of displaced children)
- Strengthening evidence-based diagnosis of critical implementation bottlenecks and identifying potentially scalable, transformative solutions

Implementation Progress

Overall Project Progress this Reporting Period

Overall progress this reporting period [1]	Previous Rating
Satisfactory (S)	Satisfactory (S)

Detailed Description including factors that lead to an upgrade/downgrade in the rating

Corporate Plan and Education Sector Plan (ESP)

Cabinet endorsement of the completed ESP is pending due to requested revisions following review by the new government. The new government, elected after the snap election, requested some revisions to the ESP to reflect its priorities – such as introducing a free school lunch programme. The Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) are completing the final revisions to the sector and corporate plans to accommodate the direction of the new government and will then work to rebuild momentum in programme delivery including the finalization of pending contracts. The revised ESP will ensure alignment with the government's education agenda before endorsement.

Inclusive Education (IE) Review

The sector-wide review has progressed to the validation stage with SCG supporting technical and community consultations. A workshop with the school leaders (principals and deputy principals from public, private and mission schools) is scheduled for the end of January 2026 to validate draft recommendations. This step will finalise actionable strategies for improving inclusive education across the sector.

Teaching Profession study

The inception phase is complete, and desk review concluded in November 2025. Field data collection will begin in the third week of January 2026 to generate evidence-based insights for strengthening teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development.

Other
- Legislative Review TA contracted and due to start Jan. 2026
- Embedded capacity support to Policy and Planning Division advertised

Overall, programme delivery has been set at Moderately Satisfactory. The snap election caused delays in the official launch of the ESP as the new government formed and reviewed policy and resulted in changes in Ministry leadership. These disruptions also affected communication activities under Window 2. To address these constraints, priority action will include re-engaging with new leadership to confirm commitments and accelerate decision-making.

Grant Implementation Progress, by Grant Window

Grant Window	Level of Progress this Reporting Period [2]	Previous Rating
Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact	Satisfactory (S)	Satisfactory (S)

Detailed Description:
The completion of the Partnership Compact (Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga) supported the parameter identification and successful endorsement of the STG programme for Samoa. Likewise, within this period, the review of the previous Sector and Corporate Plan; and the Education Sector Analysis directly fed into the finalization of the new Corporate and Education Sector Plan (ESP) for Samoa.

The high-level priorities of the new sector plan are as follows:
i) Quality education and training outcomes;
ii) Equity and Inclusion;
iii) Relevance and Contribution; and
iv) Sector Performance and Resilience.

The three implementing agencies (IA) of the sector draft their Corporate Plans from the sector plan. For the Ministry of Education, as the IA of basic education has identified the following four outcomes for the Corporate Plan:

i) Improved learning conditions;
ii) Reduced barriers to quality and inclusive education;
iii) Revitalization and preservation of Samoan heritage and cultural practices; and
iv) An effective, efficient and resilient Ministry

Under this window, planned capacity development support for Policy, Planning and MEL was advertised. This role will particularly support the implementation of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework, Data Analysis and its use in improvement planning and the coordination and reporting of research. Skills transfer and capacity development on MEC staff is expected across the consultancy.

The new government, elected after the snap election, requested a review of the newly developed ESP in detail to ensure it is reflective of its priorities – such as introducing a free school lunch programme. The revised ESP will ensure alignment with the government's education agenda before endorsement. The leadership of the Policy, Planning and Research Division, together with the Education Sector Coordination Division, are jointly leading this work and are actively following up on the Cabinet's decision. Both divisions are aiming for Cabinet approval by the end of January or early February.

Inclusive Education (IE) Review

Following an initial review process in May 2025, the sector wide review of Inclusive Education in Samoa has progressed to the validation stage. A workshop with the school leaders (principals and deputy principals from public, private and mission schools) is scheduled for the end of January 2026 to validate draft recommendations. This step will finalise actionable strategies for improving inclusive education across the sector. The process has included an initial desk review by the consultant, followed by bilateral interviews and groups discussions with the Ministry of Education stakeholders and senior management conducted in May 2025. Data analysis from these engagements informed the draft findings that will be validated in January 2026. Key findings to be presented to stakeholders include: (i) Inter-agency coordination mechanisms and referral pathways exist but require strengthening to improve service delivery and disability identification; (ii) Awareness of inclusive education and disability rights has increased, though discrimination persists and further public campaigns are needed; (iii) Training pathways show that inclusive education is embedded in pre-service programmes, but in-service teacher training and support for teacher aides remain limited; (iv) School-level practices demonstrate progress in accessibility, use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and mainstreaming, though challenges remain with infrastructure, class sizes, and availability of reasonable accommodations; and (v) Community and sector partnerships need revitalisation to ensure inclusive education principles are consistently applied in school plans and community engagement activities.

Teaching Profession study

The inception phase for the study on the teacher profession has completed. The review is focused on: (i) a situational analysis of teachers with attention to equity across subsectors, including policy and governance tools, professional standards, and teacher qualifications; (ii) employment conditions, including comparisons with other professions within the government sector; (iii) the teaching environment; (iv) stakeholder perceptions of the profession; and (v) identifying data gaps related to recruitment, retention, and career pathways to inform the development of data collection tools. These areas of interest were discussed with the Ministry of Education's senior leadership, who also reviewed and approved the proposed methodology and data collection approach. Their feedback ensured alignment with national priorities and contextual relevance. The insights provided helped refine the inception report, strengthen the study design, and ground the global evidence in Samoa's realities. This collaborative process has enabled the Ministry and consultant team to prepare for the upcoming data collection with clarity and shared ownership, positioning the study to deliver meaningful, actionable findings.

Field data collection will begin in the third week of January 2026 to generate evidence-based insights for strengthening teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development. The inception phase involved a preliminary review of relevant documents and comprised two key activities. First, a rapid scan of academic literature was undertaken to establish an evidence base on factors that attract or discourage individuals from entering or remaining in the teaching profession. This included a review of global research on teacher shortages, motivation, and wellbeing. Second, a review of grey (non-academic) literature, policy documents, and planning materials from Ministry partners was completed to understand the current state of the teaching workforce in Samoa.

ECE Study

The ECE study has been completed reviewing the system across the following domains: Planning and budgeting, Curriculum development and Implementation, Workforce Development, Family, and Community Engagement, Quality Assurance and Enabling Environment. The findings will be presented at the annual Teachers Conference in January 2026 to agree on recommendations to take forward.

Capacity Area Window 2: Mobilize coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change - Moderately Satisfactory

Technical Assistance for Legislative Review contracted to undertake a review of the Education Act and amendments. This assignment is essential to keep it responsive to Samoa's evolving educational needs,

ensuring it remains inclusive, aligned with international standards, and effective in improving teaching quality and student outcomes. There are areas of work in the sector e.g. ECE that are not adequately covered by the current Act and also areas such as Corporal Punishment where interpretation across schools is leading to inconsistent practice and rising levels of concerns across schools and communities. The review process will include wide consultation to ensure scope and clarity of the legislation.
Window 2 also includes a significant amount of communications work for the new ESP and Corporate plan This is currently on hold until the new cabinet has endorsed the plan. A previously drafted ToR will be revisited to ensure it meets any new requirements prior to contracting TA and media production support. The ToR for the expenditure review has been drafted with contracting expected in Q1 2026.

Capacity area window 3: Strengthen capacity, adapt, and learn, to implement and drive results at scale - Moderately Satisfactory

The upgrade of specific modules within SEMIS was identified under the SCG to ensure data met the needs of the Ministry for decision making. The upgrade of the assessment data module of the SEMIS is complete. Work on the teacher registration online module is in planning. These modules are in line with the Pacific Schools Information Management System (PacSIMS) implementation in Samoa. Upgrading the SEMIS modules is essential to improve data management across the education system by enabling schools to capture and submit information more efficiently through standardised digital processes. This will reduce costs, inefficiencies, and data discrepancies while enhancing data quality and integrity.

Lessons, innovative/promising practices

Improved Coordination and Ownership
• Strengthening programme management and coordination has led to greater Ministry ownership and leadership.
• Continuous engagement with senior leadership helped maintain focus on programme deliverables despite political changes. Likewise, effective communication across all members of senior management has ensured that everyone is aligned on activity objectives
and progress in implementation, fostering a shared understanding and commitment to achieving programme goals.
• For the IE and Teacher Studies, multiple consultations and dialogue sessions with were conducted with MEC senior leadership from inception phase. Feedback and insights were effectively considered and incorporated to ensure alignment with Ministry priorities.
The collaborative dialogues also resulted in the sharing of recently available data and information without difficulty, strengthening the evidence base for the respective studies.

Impact stories

n/a

Tangible Outputs, Knowledge Products, Results Framework and other Supporting Documentation

#	File Name	Document Type	Description
1	ESP2025-2030-FINAL.pdf	Knowledge Product	ESP from Jan

The documents listed were submitted with the progress report. If you'd like access to them, please contact the grant operations officer for your country.

Financial Reporting & Grant Management

Financial Reporting on GPE Grant

Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate

Approved Budget to Date	Cumulative Expenditure	Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate	Level of Financial Absorption
1,069,998.93	463,738.67	43.34	Off Track

Since the financial absorption is not rated as 'on track', please provide an explanation that identifies the main activities that have been delayed and their corresponding unspent amounts, as well as reasons for the delay and steps taken to ensure that expenditure absorption gets on track in the next reporting period.

Cumulative financial absorption does not fully portray the level of progress, as funds in hard commitments (e.g. contracts that are being implemented) are not counted. As noted in the last report, there have been some savings in the SCG, and once the ESP and new Corporate Plan are endorsed, these will be reallocated to the priorities identified by government consultation with the sector and ESAC (LEG

Budget Variance Analysis for the Current Reporting Period

Total Approved Budget for the Current Reporting Period

1,069,998.93

Total Expenditure for the Current Reporting Period

463,738.67

Explanation for underspending or overspending in excess of 10%

n/a

Management Performance

Level of management performance

Satisfactory (S)

Detailed Description

The UNICEF Field Office in Samoa has successfully recruited an Education Specialist to work with MEC on the implementation of the SCG along with other programme work. Additional staff support is available from Suva. Strong partnership and communication with MEC, particularly in sector coordination and planning divisions remains. The administration of funding flows has improved, meaning implementation planning progresses with greater confidence

Revisions to the grant

This period, have there been any revisions to the grant other than those submitted to the Secretariat for their approval?

No

How likely is that the grant agent will submit a request for revision to the Secretariat in the next 12 months for their approval?

Moderately Likely

Detailed Description

The possibility of requesting an extension is indicated to allow for any adjustments to the programme of the new government and CEO to be discussed through ESAC (LEG).

Annexes

Annex 1: List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESAC	Education Sector Advisory Council

1 Highly Unsatisfactory- The grant has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory - The grant has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory - The grant has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory - The grant is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory – The grant is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory - The grant is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

2 Highly Unsatisfactory – The window has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory – The window has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory – The window has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings. Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

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