Request for Expression of Interest

GPE 2030 Evaluation Portfolio – Grant Agent

Clarification Call, October 26, 2026

Questions and Answers

This document consolidates questions raised verbally, in chat, and by email by potential applicants during and after the Clarification Call. It clarifies aspects of the Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) that may have been unclear, ensuring all interested parties have the same information when preparing expressions of interest and supporting a fair, transparent selection process. These responses clarify but do not amend the REOI; if inconsistencies arise, the REOI and official written communications from the Secretariat take precedence.

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ACCREDITED STATUS

Q. What does it mean that only "accredited GPE grant agents" can submit a proposal?

A. In order to receive GPE fund resources an organization must be accredited and have signed the financial procedures agreement with GPE trustee. The organization will also undertake the fiduciary responsibility for the entirety of the received funds, including those it will transfer to sub-awardees. The applicant must be an accredited GPE grant agent whose accreditation is active and in good standing when the expression of interest is submitted. This is a pass/fail eligibility requirement. A non-accredited organization cannot lead an application or become accredited through this process, but may participate as a consortium member or subcontractor (see "Delivery Model" below).

Q. How many accredited GPE grant agents are there (e.g. those operating in The Gambia)?

A. GPE has nearly 40 accredited multilateral, bilateral, and international nonprofit grant agents, some operating in The Gambia. The list of accredited GPE grant agents is available at: https://www.globalpartnership.org/what-we-do/how-we-work/grant-agents

DELIVERY MODEL

Q. Does the Secretariat envisage a sole provider, a consortium led by a grant agent, or providers commissioned for individual assignments?

A. The Secretariat seeks one accredited grant agent to lead the full multi-year evaluation portfolio. It may deliver through its own teams, subcontractors for individual assignments, or a combination. In all cases, the grant agent remains accountable for portfolio quality and timeliness and for its fiduciary responsibilities.

Q. Our organization is not currently an accredited grant agent. May we still participate in a consortium?

A. Yes. A non-accredited organization may participate as a subcontractor if an accredited grant agent leads the application and accepts fiduciary and other responsibility for the full grant.

Q. Does the Secretariat prefer a consortium configuration or limit the number, location, or type of partners (e.g., universities)?

A. No specific consortium configuration or maximum number of partners is prescribed. Arrangements should be proportionate and manageable; each partner should add clear technical, geographic, or operational value and complementarity, not unnecessary complexity. Partners may be in different locations and may be academic, non-academic, nonprofit, or private-sector organizations. The proposal should identify all partners, explain their roles and value, describe governance and coordination, and show how the accredited lead will retain responsibility.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Q. May a grant agent apply if it is currently implementing a GPE-funded program or initiative?

A. Yes. Existing involvement in GPE-funded programs or initiatives does not automatically disqualify an organization. However, applicants must disclose actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest and explain safeguards to preserve the independence and credibility of the evaluation portfolio during implementation.

Q. What situations could constitute an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest?

A. Examples include evaluating a GPE-funded program or activity that the applicant, a consortium member, or proposed evaluation staff member designed, managed, implemented, or supervised; or having reporting lines or financial interests that could influence the evaluation. Conflicts involving consortium members or subcontractors must also be disclosed and will be assessed case by case during selection and after appointment.

Q. How should applicants approach conflict-of-interest management? Would using the grant agent's independent evaluation unit be a sufficient measure?

A. Implementing this work through an independent evaluation unit may be a strong safeguard; its specific adequacy depends on the circumstances and should be explained in the proposal. Other measures may include separate reporting lines, external quality assurance, recusal from specific assignments, firewalls between operational and evaluation teams, and ongoing transparent disclosure. Grant agents should combine measures suited to each evaluation and applicant; their adequacy will be assessed case by case.

OVERALL METHODOLOGY

Q. How much detail is expected in the Approach Statement?

A. A full technical proposal or methodology is not required at the EOI stage. Applicants should briefly outline suitable approaches for each workstream; explain how they support learning and evidence use nationally and globally; embed gender equality, inclusion, and intersectionality;

balance existing evidence with targeted primary research; and organize teams for rigorous, independent, timely delivery.

Q. Does the Secretariat expect proposals to address specific evaluation or research techniques?

A. The Secretariat does not prescribe methods at the EOI stage; these should be tailored once evaluation questions are defined and may include, but are not limited to, approaches in the REOI. Applicants should use their expertise to propose appropriate methods and show how they would move beyond broad contribution analysis to generate deeper, actionable evidence.

Q. Can the Secretariat identify exemplar evaluations, what made them effective, and what applicants should avoid?

A. Applicants should not reproduce a single previous model. Approaches should suit each workstream and country or program context and reflect sound evaluation practice. Strong proposals will explain how teams will address key questions consistently, use available evidence rigorously, maintain independence, apply and reflect on proportionate designs, and generate timely, actionable learning. They should balance breadth across countries with enough depth to explain how and why results emerge, for whom, and under what conditions. Applicants should avoid rigid standard designs, unnecessary primary data collection, insufficient attention to use, and products delivered too late to inform learning or decisions.

Q. What data or evidence will be available, and what primary data collection is expected?

A. Secondary evidence will vary by evaluation and is expected to include: (i) country education sector plans, policies, reform budgets, administrative and learning data, prior research and evaluations, compact documentation, and monitoring; (ii) GPE grant documentation and monitoring; and (iii) relevant partner evidence, including from partnership compact contributors. Primary data should fill gaps, test emerging findings, or capture underrepresented perspectives. It may include interviews or focus groups with officials from education, finance, and other relevant ministries; the coordinating agency; grant agent office; civil society and teacher representatives; and other key local education group members. The country context, evaluation questions, and available evidence should determine the number and mix of participants; applicants should propose a balanced approach, not a fixed interview target.

Q. What do you mean by "co-creation", whom should it involve, and when should it occur?

A. We mean proportionate engagement with relevant users and stakeholders to shape useful evaluation questions, interpretation, and learning products while preserving independence. Depending on the evaluation, participants may include Secretariat teams throughout the evaluation; country partners such as the Ministry of Education contact, grant agent office, and coordinating agency; and key local education group members, without necessarily involving the full group. Engagement should fit the purpose and context rather than include every stakeholder at every stage.

COUNTRY LEARNING STUDY

Q. Are the 20 country case studies expected to be full evaluations?

A. No. They will be in-depth cases under one umbrella Country Learning Study, not 20 stand-alone evaluations with separate designs. The Study and cases will examine systemic education reform implementation, partner roles, sustainable financing, and the contribution of GPE grants and co-financing. The overarching design should be reasonably tailored to each country's context and learning needs.

Q. Has the country sample been set? If not, should applicants propose one, and how should they develop technical and financial approaches?

A. The sample has not been set, and applicants are not asked to propose one. The Secretariat and grant agent will develop the sample and detailed methodology during inception in January 2027, likely with piloting. Proposals should describe a credible sampling approach, criteria, and trade-offs, and may suggest a few illustrative countries with reasons. The final sample should combine systematic, criterion-based selection with purposeful choices to ensure diverse contexts, reform trajectories and experiences, and learning/uptake opportunities. The EOI costing section should explain key cost drivers and assumptions for up to 20 country studies and two syntheses within the overall ceiling; costs will also inform sample planning.

Q. What are the methodology, evidence, and synthesis expectations for the Country Learning Study?

A. The Study will examine systemic education reform progress and results, including reform design and implementation, sustainable finance, partner roles, and the contribution of GPE grants/support. Methods should fit these aims and may include REOI approaches such as implementation research, delivery science, and assessment of GPE's contribution and added value. Applicants may propose adaptive or just-in-time designs that provide timely evidence for decisions.

The Study should maximize existing country reform, GPE program, and partner evidence, using targeted primary research to fill gaps and triangulate findings.

Country cases should support learning in participating countries; the two syntheses should draw cross-country lessons for strengthening the partnership and Secretariat and Board support to reforms, possibly through comparative cross-case analysis.

Q. What support will the Secretariat provide to facilitate country engagement and access to evidence for the Country Learning Study?

A. The Secretariat will facilitate introductions, provide or help identify evidence, and support partner follow-up as needed. The grant agent remains responsible for leading engagement and securing required evidence.

LEARNING AND UPTAKE

Q. Who are the primary and secondary users of the three evaluation streams, and how should use change under this portfolio?

A. Primary users include Secretariat teams and management, country partners involved in education reform, and the GPE Board and committees, with intensity varying by evaluation.

Secondary users include the wider partnership and other organizations interested in the evidence. The portfolio should strengthen timely use by engaging primary users throughout, producing targeted learning products, and enabling reflection on evidence.

Q. What would successful evaluation use and learning look like, including at country level?

A. Success would look like timely findings informing concrete decisions/learning. Previous program evaluations directly informed financing and program design, including Board deliberations and design workshops; earlier country evaluations informed later corporate strategies and operating decisions. Country-level use has been less consistent beyond dissemination and discussion. This portfolio should engage country partners more strongly so evidence informs reform implementation, addresses bottlenecks, and supports practical follow-up.

Q. What evaluation-use and learning problems should the grant agent avoid?

A. Avoid evaluations that miss country, Secretariat, or Board decision timelines; burden users; duplicate evidence; sit outside existing dialogue or planning/monitoring mechanisms; use disproportionate methods; or produce long reports.

WORKING WITH THE SECRETARIAT

Q. How will the grant agent work with Secretariat and GPE Board?

A. Through mid-2031, the grant agent will work closely with the Secretariat, especially the Data Hub team overseeing this corporate evaluation portfolio. This will include regular check-ins and quarterly reviews of progress, risks, budgets, and upcoming priorities. The grant agent should also prepare simple yearly workplans. Governance arrangements will be clarified during inception, including the Secretariat's review and approval of evaluation designs and deliverables. Engagement with Secretariat leadership and the Board will be less frequent and focused on specific decision and learning points.

Q. Given possible stakeholder or field delays, what is "satisfactory performance," how will it be assessed, and could poor performance affect the following year's funding?

A. Quarterly reviews with the Data Hub will support joint reflection on delivery, challenges, and needed adjustments, not serve as punitive exercises. Performance will be assessed against the agreed workplan and quality standards, including output quality, timeliness, financial management, and risk management. If difficulties arise, the Secretariat and grant agent will first identify causes, agree corrective actions and support, and adjust plans or timelines as appropriate. An isolated delay or issue will not constitute unsatisfactory performance; only major or persistent shortcomings that remain unresolved after these steps could affect future funding.

BUDGET

Q. How much detail is expected in the costing approach?

A. A line-item budget is not required in the EOI. Applicants should present a credible, economical approach within the all-inclusive US$5 million ceiling, covering key cost drivers and assumptions; allocations across the three evaluation workstreams. The same level of detailed is expected for sub-awarded amounts.

Q. What does the 7% indirect cost recovery cap cover, how does it differ from direct costs, and how should both be presented?

A. Indirect cost recovery, or the "agency fee," covers non-attributable headquarters and shared operational costs and is capped at 7%. Direct costs are attributable to delivery, including evaluation and grant-management staff, consultants, travel, translation, data collection, learning activities, and audits. Applicants should state the indirect-cost rate, avoid double charging, describe efficiencies, and keep all costs within the US$5 million ceiling.

Q. May direct staff, including contract or grant-management staff, be charged in addition to the indirect cost recovery fee?

A. Staff directly engaged in technical delivery or grant management should be charged as direct costs. The 7% cap applies only to indirect, non-attributable headquarters and operational costs. All costs must remain within the US$5 million ceiling.

Q. Is there a maximum contingency percentage given the assignment's duration and uncertainties?

A. No separate maximum applies. The Secretariat and selected grant agent will refine methods, workplans, and budgets as designs develop from early January 2027. Later adjustments may be negotiated as needs or circumstances change, provided the total remains within the US$5 million ceiling.

Q. What are the audit expectations?

A. Audit costs are direct costs. The entire grant amount is subject to an annual audit. Detailed requirements will be agreed during contracting and implementation under the applicable grant agreement and the selected grant agent's arrangements. Applicants should state material audit-related costing assumptions.

Q. Can the Secretariat provide evaluation cost ranges?

A. The Secretariat has not set standard ranges by evaluation type. Applicants should develop realistic unit-cost assumptions based on proposed scope and methods and their own delivery model and organizational requirements. They should identify efficiencies such as avoiding duplication, maximizing existing evidence, coordinating related data collection, using local expertise, and combining travel or stakeholder engagement where feasible. Proposals should explain principal cost drivers and assumptions and remain within the US$5 million ceiling.

NEXT STEPS

Q. Will there be a shortlist, interviews, or another technical and financial proposal stage?

A. No separate shortlist, live interview, or additional proposal stage is planned. The Secretariat will contact applicants if any further step is required and notify all applicants of the outcome by end-December 2026.

Q. What should applicants do if a material issue could prevent preparation or submission of an expression of interest?

A. The Secretariat considers the REOI, clarification call, and this document sufficient and does not expect to answer further general questions. Applicants facing a material issue that could prevent submission may contact Anne Guison-Dowdy at aguison@globalpartnership.org. Any clarification relevant to all applicants will be posted on the GPE website.