

Standard Selection Process for Grant Agents*

* For Education Sector Program Implementation Grants

FEBRUARY 2016



GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP
for EDUCATION

STANDARD SELECTION PROCESS FOR GRANT AGENTS¹

PART I: PROCESSES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. PRINCIPLES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The process and dialogue leading up to the decision on the choice of Grant Agent (GA) should be transparent and participatory, with full involvement of the Local Education Group (LEG). Non-transparent or bilateral processes and negotiations should not occur.

The final selection of the GA must be approved by the Government and endorsed by the Development Partner Group (DPG), including civil society (CSO) representation. This requires developing a consensus, similar to that required for an endorsed Education Sector Plan (ESP) and the submission on an Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) application.

The Coordinating Agency (CA) plays an important role in supporting the development of consensus, within the DPG and with the Government. The Government and CA work together to plan the process and document it, in consultation with the LEG and DPG. In situations where the CA is also a candidate Grant Agent, the Government and Development partners will have to adapt processes to address the conflict of interest.

The process and dialogue around the choice of GA should be integrated as much as possible in the broader sector dialogue around aid effectiveness, coordination, harmonization and alignment. This offers the prospect of a streamlined process, with limited additional transaction costs.

The Secretariat acts as a facilitator and advisor, making sure that Government and CA are informed on the minimum required processes, GPE principles, guidelines and example good practices. The Secretariat also carries out the quality assurance review to assess whether minimum process and standards have been applied. Through its advisory and quality assurance role the Secretariat will flag early on in the process any risks related to minimum process and standards. This will be documented through the quality assurance review reports and the Final Readiness Review (FRR) report submitted to the Country Grants and Performance Committee (CGPC).

¹ Approved by the Country Grants and Performance Committee, in its delegated authority from the Board of Directors, on February 22, 2016. The process applies to Education Sector Program Implementation Grants and is applicable to all countries who have not – as of February 22, 2016 - informed the Secretariat of the selection of a GA. The Secretariat will integrate some measure of flexibility for those countries that may be very advanced in their selection process.

2. PROCESS

Dialogue and selection of a Grant Agent needs to be planned through a comprehensive road map and terms of reference. This roadmap should include key sequenced steps and be approved by the Government and by the Development Partner Group, through the LEG. The roadmap and terms of reference will be need to be relevant to each country context, but should at minimum include:

- Preliminary discussions within the LEG on possible aid modalities, in line with aid effectiveness principles, including the potential for alignment with national systems and the reduced fragmentation of external aid resources. Ideally, this should occur as an integral part of the education sector planning process.
- Definition of processes and criteria to deliberate on the choice of GA. The criteria should be based on criteria included in GPE guidelines (cf. Part IV) and the results of the preliminary discussions on aid modalities.
- Discussing and canvassing of potential candidate agencies, prior to any expressions of interest.
- Call for expressions of interest.
- In the case of multiple expressions of interest the process for deliberation will need to be developed in more detail, to guarantee full transparency and objectivity. In some cases this may take the form of a formal evaluation.
- Candidate(s) present their expressions of interest (through a specific written format, or a presentation), responding to the defined processes and criteria.
- On the basis of the previous steps, a consensual or mutually agreed decision is developed, to be approved by Government and endorsed by the Development Partner Group.

Note: in a given context it may be appropriate to have more than one GA. This option can be discussed in the dialogue, weighed against other considerations (notably the downsides of aid fragmentation).

Every effort must be made to reach a consensus. In cases where a consensual decision cannot be reached, a recourse can be made to the *conflict resolution mechanism* which is to be adopted by the GPE Board in June 2016.

3. DOCUMENTATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The process, key steps and final decision will be documented and then reviewed during the Secretariat's Quality Assurance Review, phase 1 (QAR 1).

The above processes, sequencing and responsibilities are summarized in Part III.

PART II: CRITERIA

Existing criteria, included in current GPE guidelines (cf., terms of reference for the former Supervising Entities and Managing Entities, now both referred to as Grant Agents), are considered adequate, with only minor adjustments. The important point is that they should be used within a clearer set of processes and responsibilities.

Part IV presents the criteria. These have been taken from existing guidelines, with some adjustments, including additional explanations.

PART III: KEY STEPS AND SEQUENCING FOR SELECTION OF A GRANT AGENT

	Step	Key responsibility	Key partner fora
1	Development of roadmap and terms of reference for GA selection that includes all key steps and sequences	Government/Ministry of Education (MoE) and CA	LEG
2	Preliminary dialogue on aid effectiveness and potential for modalities better aligned on national systems	Government/MoE, CA	LEG
3	Development of deliberative process and criteria	Government/MoE, CA	LEG
4	Canvassing of potential candidates	CA, Government/MoE	LEG and DPG ²
5	Call for expressions of interest	Government/MoE, CA	LEG
6	Update of deliberative process and criteria in the case of multiple expressions of interest	Government/MoE, CA	LEG

² LEG is the key forum for all the processes of dialogue. Where the DPG is also indicated, this denotes the need for specific dialogue and deliberation within that group.

7	Candidate(s) present(s) their expression(s) of interest	GA candidate(s), Government/MoE, CA	LEG
8	Discussions and deliberation on expression(s) of interest, on the basis of agreed process and criteria, towards consensus	Government/MoE, CA	LEG and DPG
9	Adoption by Government and endorsement by DPG of selected GA OR Appeal to conflict resolution mechanism (to be developed) in case of non-agreement	Government/MoE, CA	LEG and DPG
10	Quality assurance review of the process leading to the final designation of the GA	GPE Secretariat	LEG

These 10 steps provide a process by which some of the typical areas of contention and tension that can arise can be best apprehended and handled. In country contexts that are not difficult, the steps can be followed relatively quickly, with minimal transaction costs.

The Secretariat will provide a support function throughout the steps and as required. In cases where the process is well handled by the responsible country level actors, this support might be minimal. The Secretariat will invest its time and resources more heavily where this is not the case.

For its quality assurance function the Secretariat will focus particular attention on:

- Step 1: the development of the overall roadmap and terms of reference.
- Step 3 and step 6: development of more detailed deliberative process and criteria.
- Step 10: formal Quality Assurance Review, based on documented steps.

Significant breaches of process, or difficulties, will be flagged as early on in the process as possible. The Secretariat will also flag any unresolved issues in the quality assurance review reports (in particular, QAR 1) and in the Final Readiness Review report to the CGPC.

PART IV: CRITERIA TO BE CONSIDERED FOR SELECTION OF A GRANT AGENT

Criteria	Description and example indicators
Ability to work through the most appropriate modality	In most cases, this will be the ability to work with the modality that is most aligned with national systems. The candidate agency would display experience, internationally and in country, with such modalities. In specific cases – such as conflict states with non-functional governments or administration – the most appropriate modality could be different.
Ability to formulate and oversee programs of similar grant size and scope	Nature and performance of the agency’s education portfolio in the country, and internationally.
Ability to discharge fiduciary and administrative responsibilities	Experience, in country and internationally, with managing fiduciary and administrative risk, relative to the modality and scope of the grant.
Ability to support the government in implementing the education sector plan	Experience, internationally and in country, in managing grants that support the implementation of sector-wide and program-wide approaches.
Commitment to joint sector dialogue and coordination	Level and extent of previous participation in the LEG and joint sector dialogue.
Agreement within the candidate GA at the highest appropriate level to take on this role	In most cases this would be clearance and support from the candidate agency’s HQ.

The Government and Development partners will be expected to elaborate on the indicators, in line with the context and the assessment of needs at country level. In particular, in the case of multiple GA candidates, the indicators will have to be relevant, clear and objective.