

# Terms of Reference *for* Coordinating Agencies

AUGUST 2016



GLOBAL  
PARTNERSHIP  
*for* EDUCATION

## USEFUL DOCUMENTS

Documents  
referenced in these  
Terms of Reference

- [GPE Charter](#)
- [GPE Country-level Process Guide](#)
- [TOR for Grant Agents](#)
- [ESPDG Guidelines](#)
- [PDG Guidelines](#)
- [ESPIG Guidelines](#)
- [ESPIG Policy](#)
- [Conflict Resolution Procedures](#)

## I. Introduction

---

The GPE country-level processes seek purposefully to enhance collaboration among all actors involved in education sector development, as the Global Partnership for Education is built around the theory that transparent and efficient support to developing country partners is best enabled when all partners work together under the leadership of governments, and when roles and responsibilities are assigned through mutually agreed processes that fit the specific country context.

Most countries that join the GPE already have an education partner coordination mechanism in place, usually with a lead or coordinating development partner who facilitates collaboration between the government and partners. As a priority, GPE will always seek to strengthen such existing mechanisms. In case these are not in place, the Secretariat will ask countries that intend to join the GPE to 1) form a local education group and to 2) designate a coordinating agency (CA), upon joining the GPE and prior to engaging in any grant application process.

### **The role of CAs**

CAs play a facilitating role in implementing guiding principles of the GPE, especially those related to ensuring an inclusive, evidence-based policy dialogue, engaging the government and international development partners, as well as civil society, teachers and the private sector. In doing so, it plays a key role in ensuring harmonized support for development effectiveness, as well as mutual accountability and transparency across the partnership.

The CA has a central role in facilitating the work of the local education group under the leadership of the government. It also coordinates and facilitates the development partners' engagement with the GPE, and thereby serves as the communication link between the local education group and the Secretariat. In many cases, and as good practice, communication with the Secretariat is also copied to the government's GPE focal point<sup>1</sup> to ensure that both the government and the other partners of the local education group more broadly are well informed of GPE matters.

The purpose of these terms of reference is to provide general guidance for designating a CA and for defining their general functions, as well as their specific roles and

responsibilities in relation to the country's engagement with the GPE. The terms of reference do not address mechanisms for broader coordination of education sector developments, which depend on in-country arrangements and organization of development aid.

---

<sup>1</sup> The government's GPE focal point is appointed by the minister of education to facilitate the country's participation in the GPE's representative Board structure through constituencies. The focal point will be involved in constituency discussions around Board documents and proposals, and is therefore also a key link between GPE at the global level and GPE at country level. If the government-appointed GPE focal point holds a key role in the local education group, such as head of planning, it is generally good practice to ensure that both the CA and the government's GPE focal points are copied to GPE-related communication.

## II. Designating a CA

---

The CA is designated through consensus by the local education group (including the government), which also defines the tasks, accountabilities, and operational procedures of the CA in light of the existing country-level arrangements of the education sector.

In countries where a lead partner already exists, the CA for GPE-related matters should be that same agency so as to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that GPE-related matters are an integral part of the broader sector dialogue. GPE will work with this in-country lead partner for all GPE matters, and support and seek to develop the existing and country-owned coordinating mechanism as relevant.

In addition to the above, it is generally also considered good practice to ensure that the CA is a different agency than the one that is nominated to act as the GPE grant agent, as it is recommended to separate these two functions for shared responsibility and transparency in decision-making.

There is no set duration of term for CAs, as this depends on the country's own coordination mechanisms. Countries have different arrangements, many working with a two-year rotation, sometimes using an arrangement under which three donors act as lead on a rotating basis (outgoing, current and incoming lead). When a new CA is selected the outgoing CA should inform the Secretariat of the change, copying the new CA and providing the new contact details to ensure a smooth transition in communication with the Secretariat. Similarly, a change in the CA contact person should be communicated promptly to the Secretariat.

## III. General objectives

---

The general and primary objectives of CAs are to:

### 1. **Facilitate the work of the local education group**

The CA facilitates the work of the local education group in all aspects to enable in-country development partners to collectively support the government, and the government to lead and interact with partners effectively, with low transaction costs. The CA helps develop partners' working relationship into a constructive one that enhances sector dialogue performance under the leadership of the government. It coordinates the members of the group in its role of supporting the government in joint monitoring of education sector plans and policies.

### 2. **Foster a strong, inclusive approach**

The CA promotes the inclusion of non-governmental organizations in the work of the local education group to ensure harmonized support for the government's education plans and programs. In countries where civil society, the private sector, and/or non-governmental

organizations are not engaged in the local education group, the CA promotes dialogue regarding their inclusion, and generally mobilizes partners for meetings.

### **3. Support joint sector reviews**

The CA supports the government in organizing joint sector reviews by promoting an inclusive approach and helping ensure that they are well prepared, organized and followed up so that expected results are achieved and effectively support the joint monitoring of education plans and policies. Depending on in-country arrangements, the CA may support the government in preparing and/or distributing the annual sector plan implementation report as a basis for the joint sector review discussions; the CA may also take the lead in or otherwise support the elaboration of a report or Aide Memoire on the joint sector review. In any case, the CA ensures that the Secretariat is informed of the timing of the reviews and receives the reports, which unless stated otherwise will be published on the GPE website.

### **4. Facilitates conflict resolution**

If required or requested by partners, the CA may facilitate the implementation of the GPE conflict resolution procedures to solve any GPE-related challenges that may emerge within the multi-stakeholder partnership (*Conflict Resolution Procedures*, see link, p. iii).

## **IV. Roles and responsibilities in relation to GPE processes**

### **GPE principles and processes**

CAs are expected to actively support and facilitate GPE principles and processes and therefore be fully familiar with GPE documents, in particular the following:

- ➔ *GPE Charter*, outlining the GPE compact of mutual accountability and overall roles and responsibilities of key players.
- ➔ *GPE Country-level Process Guide*, providing an overview of the GPE operational platform and country-level processes
- ➔ GPE grant guidelines, providing step by step guidance for each grant cycle and outlining roles and responsibilities in relation to each type of grant.

For more information:

- *GPE Charter*, see link, page ii.
- *GPE Country-level Process Guide*, see link, page ii.
- *ESPDG Guidelines* | *PDG Guidelines* | *ESPIG Guidelines*, see links, page ii.

In line with the general objectives described above, the CA has specific roles and responsibilities to ensure that various operations related to GPE processes and financing take place and move forward in a timely and inclusive manner. More specifically, the CA:

**1. Provides communication support**

The CA serves as a communication link between the Secretariat and local education group, including the government. As such, most of the information from the Secretariat is channeled through the CA, while the Secretariat relies on the CA for prompt and smooth information sharing on all GPE-related matters and sector developments in general. The CA also ensures that the Secretariat has updated information regarding the names and contacts of ministers of education and of finance, as well as other key government contacts.

**2. Coordinates initial dialogue for the country to join the GPE**

The CA coordinates the initial dialogue with the government and the Secretariat about joining the GPE and links with the Secretariat's country lead for the country in question to clarify how GPE works, roles and responsibilities of key players, and GPE's added value to country-level processes.

**3. Facilitates the selection of grant agents**

The CA plays an important role in supporting the development of multi-stakeholder consensus during the grant agent selection process (*Terms of Reference for Grant Agents*, see link, page ii). It generally facilitates communication including the transmission of the letter of the government that formalizes the selection of the grant agent as mutually agreed with the local education group, and provides further documentation of the selection process as relevant. In situations where the CA is also a grant agent candidate, the government and development partners will have to adapt the standard selection process to address the conflict of interest.

**4. Supports application processes for GPE financing**

The CA fosters open and inclusive dialogue among members of the local education group in the context of the preparations of applications for GPE financing, developed by the GPE grant agent in close collaboration with the government. The CA is instrumental in ensuring that members have sufficient information to make meaningful inputs. It also works with the grant agent and the rest of the local education group to facilitate in-country quality assurance tasks and processes as described in the specific grant guidelines, and to ensure that these steps are included in the local education group's own work plan. In general, for each of the three grants, the CA facilitates discussion towards consensus around GPE financing and support, so that the local education group can endorse the application prior to its submission to the Secretariat.

**5. Provides technical and/or financial support to the government**

As other in-country development partners and as a regular member of the local education group, it is expected that the CA provides technical and/or financial support to the education

sector analysis and education sector plan development and implementation in line with the CA's comparative advantages and agreements with the government.

**6. Leads the independent appraisal and endorsement of the education plan**

The CA leads or facilitates the tasks of the in-country development partners in the context of the independent appraisal and the endorsement of the education plan. This entails monitoring that the quality assurance requirements for selecting the reviewers are met (ESPDG guidelines, see link, page 3). It also entails supporting or facilitating the discussions within the local education group on the recommendations of the appraisal and the Secretariat's comments. The CA generally calls the endorsement meeting, during which the in-country development partners sign the endorsement letter, and subsequently sends the endorsement letter to the Secretariat on behalf of the in-country partners.

**7. Facilitates discussions on the country's readiness to fulfill funding requirements**

The CA keeps the local education group informed of GPE indicative Maximum Country Allocations, decided by the Board based on a needs-based approach and funds available, and facilitates the government's communication with the Secretariat on its intention to request financing. The CA facilitates discussions with the government within the local education group about the timing of applications according to GPE deadlines (for EPSIG) and the country-level readiness to respond to requirements of the GPE funding model (*Country-level Process Guide*, see link, page ii).

**8. Facilitates discussion on indicators for the Variable Part (ESPIG)**

Under the leadership of the government, the CA facilitates the discussion within the local education group on whether, how and when to apply for the incentives-based Variable Part of the Maximum Country Allocation (ESPIG guidelines, see link, page ii). This entails country ownership and consensus building on what indicators to use to best measure transformative strategies to improve equity, efficiency and learning outcomes in basic education, including a results chain with indication of when and how the intended results will be assessed.

**9. Supports grant implementation and monitoring**

The CA works with the GPE grant agent to ensure that the local education group is updated regularly about progress of grant implementation. In case the government and the grant agent determine the need to revise a grant, the CA, as required by the specific grant guidelines and policies (see links, page ii), ensures that the local education group is consulted with regard to necessary program revisions before the grant agent submits the request to the Secretariat. The CA also stays informed of grant implementation and funding commitments and timely and efficient disbursements.

**10. Facilitates reflections on lessons learnt on grant implementation**

The CA invites members of the local education group to share lessons learnt regarding grant implementation to inform future country processes and strategies to support the government effectively, and in support of the grant agent in charge of gathering information on lessons learnt from the grants and preparing grant completion and/or progress reports.

**11. Responds to special requests from the Secretariat**

The CA provides data and other country specific information, when requested, or responds to periodic questionnaires, concerning issues of interest across the GPE to feed into the GPE results framework. This task also allows the Secretariat to keep informed of strengths and challenges at the country level and to more effectively target the Secretariat's support to the needs of developing country partners.