

# Terms of Reference for Coordinating Agencies

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GLOBAL  
PARTNERSHIP  
*for* EDUCATION

## I. Introduction

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The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that aims to strengthen education systems in developing countries in order to dramatically increase the number of children who are in school and learning.

GPE brings together developing countries, donors, international organizations, civil society, teacher organizations, the private sector and foundations. Its mission is to mobilize global and national efforts to contribute to the achievement of equitable, quality education and learning for all, through inclusive partnership, a focus on effective and efficient education systems, and increased financing.

GPE has adopted as its vision the [global goal for education](#), calling for inclusive, equitable quality education for all by 2030. [GPE 2020](#), GPE's strategic plan turns this vision into actionable goals and objectives. GPE 2020 tasks the partnership with three clear and ambitious goals:

1. Improved and more equitable learning outcomes
2. Increased equity, gender equality and inclusion
3. Effective and efficient education systems

At country level, GPE partners hold each other accountable for delivering on GPE 2020's three country-level objectives:

1. Strengthening education sector planning and policy implementation
2. Supporting mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring
3. Ensuring efficient and effective delivery of GPE support

The partnership is based on *mutual accountability*, whereby every partner is expected to commit and adhere to the accountabilities expressed in the Compact set out in the GPE Charter and fulfill corresponding roles and responsibilities. Each partner has a necessary and specific role to play to achieve the shared objectives of the partnership.

At country level, the partnership functions within the forum where the primary consultation on education sector development takes place between a government and its partners, referred to in GPE terms as the *local education group* (LEG). *Partnership framework* is a general term used by GPE to refer to the terms of reference (TOR), memorandum of understanding or other agreement established between the government and its partners to frame this collaboration and associated responsibilities.

The following *terms of reference* sets out the definition and roles and responsibilities of the coordinating agency (CA).

## II. Definition and framing

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*Coordinating agency (CA)* is the term used by GPE to refer to the partner appointed at country level to support the government with education development partner coordination.<sup>1</sup>

Although the CA contributes to the achievement of all three GPE country-level strategic objectives, the role of CA is of particular importance in promoting *mutual accountability* around the Compact set out in the GPE Charter through the GPE 2020 objective of *inclusive sector policy dialogue and monitoring*. Effective dialogue is facilitated when there is government ownership and broad participation from all partners and stakeholders supporting education,<sup>2</sup> and the relationships and communication among these partners are built on clarity and transparency. This is promoted by the CA in sector-level processes and dialogue, as well as in relation to GPE grants.

It is important to note that, while there are particular expectations of the CA in relation to GPE-specific processes, the main focus of the CA role is to *support effective and harmonized dialogue* between development partners and the government around the country-owned policy cycle, while promoting the *inclusion of key stakeholders* such as civil society and teachers in policy dialogue. CAs are expected to do so in their own capacity as a partner to the country and contributor to or stakeholder in the education sector and, as applicable, as a member of GPE.

The CA leads coordination and communication between the Secretariat, the developing country partner (DCP) government, and the grant agents (GAs) of GPE grants. The CA has the main responsibility, supported by the GPE Secretariat, for promoting sector coordination and inclusive, effective local education groups (LEGs), and for ensuring correspondence from the GPE Secretariat is shared with LEG members.

This said, there are three key areas in which the CA plays a pivotal role in promoting mutual accountability relative to the GPE Charter and Compact: a) sector coordination; b) GPE grants; and c) communication. This TOR outlines the responsibilities that would generally fall to the CA *in these areas*. Since each country has its own established processes for sector planning and coordination, the CA role may vary according to context.

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<sup>1</sup> Countries generally have their own mechanisms for appointing a CA. The Secretariat can share examples of best practice on request.

<sup>2</sup> Generally includes donors, multilateral organizations, nongovernmental organizations (including international and local CSOs), members of the teaching profession, and the private sector and private foundations.

***The CA has the following specific responsibilities:***

### **Sector coordination**

The CA's roles and responsibilities in relation to sector coordination will be defined at country level within the LEG according to each unique context. In general, a CA promotes:

#### **(i) Effective, inclusive partnership**

- Fosters strong relationships, transparency and communication between development partners and the government.
- Enables development partners to provide harmonized support to the government, and the government to lead and interact with development partners effectively and without excessive transaction costs.
- Fosters an inclusive LEG, in particular promoting the inclusion of key stakeholders including civil society and teacher representation in the LEG.
- Supports the LEG to assess its strengths and to identify how to enhance the effectiveness and quality of the LEG's work and capacity as a forum for policy dialogue.

#### **(ii) Inclusive, evidence-based sector analysis and planning**

- Promotes transparency and clarity among the LEG on processes, roadmap and timeline for inputs to education sector analysis, ESP development and financial pledges to ESP implementation.
- Supports the government in identifying capacity to carry out key sector planning processes and coordinates LEG inputs to documentation and support for capacity development when government identifies need for targeted support. If the ESP development is supported by an education sector plan development grant (ESPDG), the CA coordinates closely with the relevant GA during ESP development.
- May provide technical support to the government in the definition of key activities and processes for ESP/TEP development, if requested.
- Supports discussions within the LEG on the recommendations of the ESP appraisal and partners' comments, including of the Secretariat.
- Facilitates LEG members' review and endorsement of the sector plan and ensures the endorsement letter is agreed to and signed by LEG members.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The endorsement of the ESP/TEP normally happens after the government – the primary owner and implementer – has adopted the ESP/TEP as its national strategy for education. Each agency decides whether it will endorse the plan and sign the collective endorsement letter. With the endorsement letter, the in-country

**(iii) Inclusive, evidence-based sector monitoring mechanisms**

- Promotes transparency and clarity within the LEG regarding processes, roadmaps and timelines for inputs to monitoring mechanisms, including joint sector reviews (JSRs).
- Coordinates LEG members to achieve the above and promotes the sharing of information and data, including on development partner financing to the education sector.
- Supports the government in preparing and organizing JSRs, ensures development partners' inputs are coordinated, follows up on whether expected results are achieved and promotes dialogue around the ongoing strengthening of JSRs.
- At the government's request, may support the preparation and/or distribution of an annual ESP/TEP implementation report and supporting documents. Supports the organization and elaboration of a JSR aide-memoire or report.
- Promotes dialogue around the monitoring of and progress towards the GPE funding model requirements commitments, including the requirement on domestic financing.

**(iv) Evaluation of national planning cycle outcomes and processes**

- Supports the government to elicit lessons learned among LEG members on ESP/TEP processes regarding sector analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and results.
- Promotes the use of data on ESP/TEP outcomes to inform dialogue around future education sector analysis, ESP/TEPs and JSRs.

**GPE grants**

- If the country is eligible for a GPE maximum country allocation (MCA), facilitates dialogue during ESP/TEP development about how and when to apply for the incentives-based variable part of the MCA<sup>4</sup> and promotes discussion on strategies for progress in equity, efficiency and learning outcomes, which can later form the basis for an ESPIG variable part application.
- Works closely with the government to facilitate the ESPDG and ESPIG GA selection processes and associated roadmaps within LEG; in line with the GA selection guidance for the ESPDG and the standard GA selection process for the ESPIG.
- If agreed, may participate with the government in the deliberative process on GA selection.

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development partners declare that they find the plan 'credible,' and that they are committed to providing their technical and/or financial support within this framework.

<sup>4</sup> In a small number of exceptional cases the discussion may be whether to apply for an ex-ante approach to the variable part. See [ESPIG Guidelines](#) for more information.

- Facilitates endorsement<sup>5</sup> of GA selection by development partners or appeals to the conflict-resolution mechanism in case of non-agreement.
- Together with the government, documents the GA selection process to facilitate Secretariat verification.
- With support from the Secretariat as needed, facilitates discussions and preparation of documentation within the LEG in relation to GPE applications and the requirements of the GPE funding model.
- May provide technical support to the government in the assessment of readiness to meet the funding model requirements, if requested.
- Facilitates LEG inputs to the ESPIG program development process at fixed intervals including concept note review, second phase of the Secretariat quality assurance (QA) process and endorsement<sup>6</sup> of the final application.
- Works with the government and GA to ensure the LEG is updated regularly (at least twice a year) about aspects of grant implementation that impact achievement of the overarching ESP policies and strategies that the ESPIG supports.
- Ensures the LEG is consulted regarding program revisions before the GA submits the revision request to the Secretariat on behalf of the government before LEG endorses program revisions.

### **GPE communication**

- Links with the Secretariat's assigned country lead to clarify how GPE works, roles and responsibilities of key players, and GPE's added value to country-level processes.
- If the country is not yet a member of the partnership, coordinates the initial dialogue between the government and the Secretariat about joining GPE.
- In complementarity with the government, informs the Secretariat of needs and challenges to effectively and appropriately target the Secretariat's support to the country.
- When a new ESP/TEP is endorsed, sends the endorsement letter to the Secretariat on behalf of the development partners.
- Ensures the Secretariat is informed of the timing of the JSR and receives related reports.
- Provides data and other country-specific information to the Secretariat as requested and as appropriate to the CA role.

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<sup>5</sup> The term "endorse" or "endorsement" in all GPE documentation means to offer public support. It does not imply formal approval or decision-making.

<sup>6</sup> Endorsement of grant application means expression of support for forwarding the proposed program to GPE Board for approval, signifying verification that the program is appropriate to the context and has been developed according to agreed process.

- Informs the Secretariat of changes in the CA (agency or contact person), copying the new CA and providing the new contact details to ensure a smooth transition in communication with the Secretariat.
- When a new minister of education is appointed, the CA helps ensure the Secretariat is informed of the change promptly, a responsibility it shares with the DCP focal point.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the CA helps ensure any changes in the DCP focal point are communicated to the Secretariat.

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<sup>7</sup> The DCP focal point is appointed and duly authorized by the Minister to serve as the ministry's primary interlocutor in GPE-related matters. The DCP focal point for GPE should have full knowledge of the GPE Charter, strategic plan and operating model at the global level and financial and technical support at country level and should facilitate communication and coordination of the country's participation in GPE governance structures within its own ministry as well as with other members of the constituency.

## **Annex 1: Designating a coordinating agent**

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

The CA is designated at country level using existing country mechanisms.

In countries where a lead partner already exists, the CA for GPE-related matters should be that same agency 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 GPE matters, and support and seek to develop the existing and country-owned coordinating mechanisms as relevant.

It is generally also considered good practice to ensure the CA is a different agency to that nominated to act as a GPE grant agent (GA), to facilitate 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 partners act as lead on a rotating basis (outgoing, current and incoming lead).

## Annex 2: Useful documents for coordinating agents

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### USEFUL DOCUMENTS FOR CAs

- [GPE Charter](#)
- [GPE Country-Level Process Guide](#)
- [TOR for ESPIG GAs](#)
- [TOR for ESPDG GAs](#)
- [ESPDG Guidelines](#)
- [PDG Guidelines](#)
- [ESPIG Guidelines](#)
- [Multiplier ESPIG Guidelines](#)
- [Policy on ESPIGs](#)
- [Conflict Resolution Procedures](#)
- [Terms of Reference for ESPDG Grant Agents](#)
- [Standard Selection Process for Grant Agents - ESPIG](#)
- [Policy and Communications Protocol on Misuse of GPE Trust Funds](#)
- [GPE Fund Governance](#)