

# **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR COORDINATING AGENCIES**

**DRAFT**

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## 1. Introduction

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the largest global fund and unique multi-stakeholder partnership solely dedicated to transforming education in middle- and lower-income countries. The partnership brings together donors, multilateral institutions, civil society, teacher representatives, philanthropic foundations and the private sector to support education transformation and deliver quality education for all boys and girls in partner countries.

GPE's strategic plan (GPE 2025) provides a platform to bring together the partnership's unique assets and ways of working in support of ambitious education transformation in partner countries.<sup>1</sup> It outlines the vision, mission and goals through four actionable objectives (three country-level objectives and one enabling objective) over the strategy's five-year period. The country-level objectives are to:

1. Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact;
2. Mobilize coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change; and
3. Strengthen capacity, adapt and learn, to implement and drive results at scale

These country-level objectives are supported by an enabling, global objective: to mobilize global and national partners and resources for sustainable results. 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 Charter of the Global Partnership for Education<sup>2</sup> 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 the country level, the partnership functions within the local education group, the forum where the primary consultation and dialogue take place to identify the country's reform priority, proposed interventions and program implementation modalities that would lead to transformational change in the education sector. The terms of reference, memorandum of understanding or other agreement established between the government and its partners to frame the collaboration within the local education group is called the partnership framework.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-2025-strategic-plan>.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/charter-global-partnership-education>.

<sup>3</sup> The **partnership framework** is different from a **partnership compact**. The latter is a document that articulates a country's prioritized reform for system transformation, led by governments and supported by development partners and other stakeholders represented in local education groups.

**The coordinating agency** plays a particularly important role in helping to ensure the success of the local education group. It also plays a critical role in helping to operationalize the GPE 2025 and realize the mission of the partnership at the country level. The following terms of reference set out the definition and roles of the coordinating agency.

## 2. Definition and framing

GPE uses the term *coordinating agency* to refer to the partner appointed at the country level to support the government with the coordination of development partners to help transform the education system.<sup>4</sup>

Although the coordinating agency contributes to the achievement of all three GPE country-level strategic objectives, the role of the agency is of particular importance in promoting mutual accountability as set out in the GPE Charter. Effective dialogue is facilitated when there is government ownership and broad participation from all partners and stakeholders supporting education,<sup>5</sup> and the relationships and communication among these partners are built on clarity and transparency. This is promoted by the coordinating agency through dialogue, as well as in relation to GPE grants.

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

The coordinating agency leads coordination and communication between the Secretariat, the partner country government and the grant agents of GPE grants. The coordinating agency has the main responsibility, supported by the Secretariat, for promoting sector coordination and inclusive, effective local education groups, and for ensuring correspondence from the Secretariat is shared with local education group members.

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<sup>4</sup> Countries generally have their own mechanisms for appointing a coordinating agency. The Secretariat can share examples of best practice on request.

<sup>5</sup> Generally, this includes donors, multilateral organizations, nongovernmental organizations (including international and local civil society organizations), members of the teaching profession, the private sector and private foundations.

**The coordinating agency plays a pivotal role in promoting mutual accountability relative to the GPE Charter in three key areas: (a) sector coordination, (b) GPE grants and (c) communication.** These terms of reference outline the responsibilities that would generally fall to the coordinating agency in these areas. Since each country has its own established processes, the coordinating agency role may vary according to context. Thus, the coordinating agency has the following specific responsibilities:

#### A. Sector coordination

The coordinating agency's roles and responsibilities in relation to sector coordination will be defined at the country level within the local education group according to each unique context. In general, a coordinating agency 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 local education group, in particular promoting the inclusion of key stakeholders including civil society and teacher representation in the education group.
- Supports the local education group to assess its strengths and to identify how to enhance the effectiveness and quality of the education group's work and capacity as a forum for policy dialogue.

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

- Promotes transparency and clarity among the local education group on processes, roadmap and timeline for inputs to education policy analysis, planning and program implementation, including the financial support for the policy priority.
- Supports the government in identifying capacity to carry out key sector planning processes and coordinates local education group inputs to documentation and support for capacity development when the government identifies need for targeted support. If the development of key policy plans (for example, the education sector plan) is supported by a system capacity grant, the agency coordinates closely with the relevant grant agent during the development of the plan.

- › May provide technical support to the government in the definition of key activities and processes for policy plan development, if requested.
- › Supports and facilitates discussions within the local education group to ensure adequate review of recommendations and partners' comments—including of the Secretariat—on key policy documents (including comments on draft partnership compact, education sector plan appraisal and so on).

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

- › Promotes transparency and clarity within the local education group regarding processes, roadmaps and timelines for inputs to monitoring mechanisms, including joint sector reviews and partnership compact monitoring/midterm reviews.
- › Coordinates local education group 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 the sector review and compact midterm review and ensures that development partners' inputs are coordinated; follows up on whether expected results are achieved and promotes dialogue around the ongoing strengthening of sector review activities.
- › At the government's request, may support the preparation and/or distribution of implementation reports and supporting documents; supports the organization and elaboration of a partnership compact midterm review or joint sector review aide-memoire or report.
- › If the reviews are supported by a system capacity grant, the coordinating agency coordinates closely with the relevant grant agent.

**B. Evaluation of national planning cycle outcomes and processes**

- › Supports the government to elicit lessons learned among local education group members on policy planning, program implementation and monitoring processes.
- › Promotes the use of data on outcomes to inform dialogue around future policy planning, analysis, program implementation and sector monitoring.

**C. GPE grants**

- › Facilitates dialogue during compact development to identify education system bottlenecks and mobilize partners at the country level to make strategic choices to address them, including the strategic focus to be financed by GPE grants for system

transformation.<sup>6</sup> This includes dialogue on the assessment of the enabling factor and how and when to address weakness through the system capacity grant or other sources of funding.

- › Works closely with the government to facilitate grant agent selection processes and associated roadmaps within the local education group for the system capacity grant and grants for system transformation—in line with GPE grant agent selection guidance.<sup>7</sup>
- › Facilitates inputs from the local education group to the transformation grant program development process at agreed intervals.
- › Works with the government and the grant agent to ensure the local education group is updated regularly (at least twice a year) about aspects of grant implementation that impact achievement of the overarching (education sector plan) policies and strategies that the transformation grants support.
- › Ensures the local education group is consulted regarding program revisions before the grant agent submits the revision request to the Secretariat on behalf of the government, prior to the local education group's endorsement of program revisions.

#### D. GPE communication

- › Links with the Secretariat's assigned country team lead to clarify how GPE works, the 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.
- › Together with the government, informs the Secretariat of needs and challenges to effectively and appropriately target the Secretariat's support to the country.
- › Where applicable, when a new education sector plan/transitional education plan is endorsed, sends the endorsement letter to the Secretariat on behalf of the development partners.

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<sup>6</sup> Includes regular system transformation grant, the Multiplier grant, and the Girls' Education Accelerator grant.

<sup>7</sup> The GPE grant agent selection guidance is available here: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/standard-selection-process-grant-agents>.

- › Ensures the Secretariat is informed of the timing of the joint sector review or compact midterm review and receives related reports.
- › Provides data and other country-specific information to the Secretariat as requested and as appropriate to the coordinating agency role.
- › Informs the Secretariat of changes in the coordinating agency (agency or contact person), copying the new agency 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 coordinating agency helps ensure the Secretariat is informed of the change promptly, a responsibility it shares with the partner country focal point.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the coordinating agency helps ensure any changes in the focal point are communicated to the Secretariat.

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<sup>8</sup> The focal point is appointed and duly authorized by the minister of education to serve as the ministry's primary interlocutor in GPE-related matters. The focal point should have full knowledge of the GPE Charter, strategic plan and operating model at the global level and financial and technical support at the country level. The focal point facilitates 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.

## Appendix 1: Designating a coordinating agent

Most countries that join GPE already have in place an education partner coordination mechanism (local education group), 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. Where these are not in place, the Secretariat will ask countries that intend to join GPE to (1) form a local education group and (2) designate a coordinating agency.

The coordinating agency is designated at the country level using existing country mechanisms.

In countries where a lead partner already exists, the coordinating agency 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 coordinating agency is a different agency to that nominated to act as a GPE grant agent, to facilitate shared responsibility and transparency in decision making.

There is no set duration of term for the coordinating agency, 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).

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