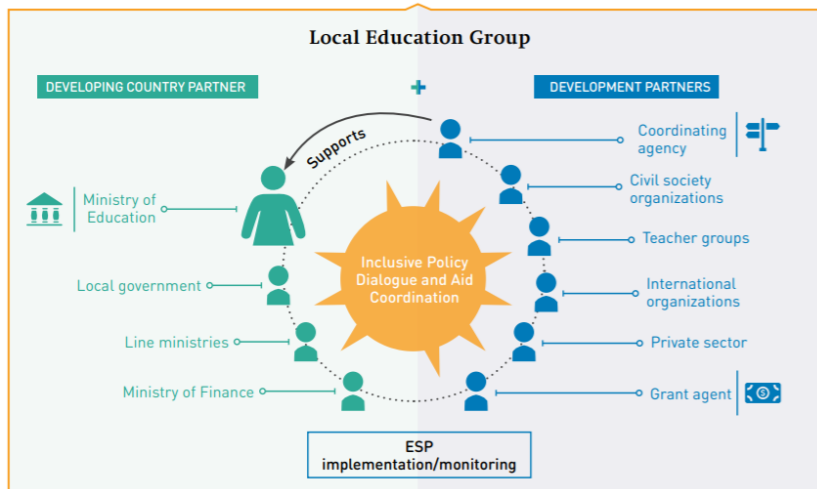


GUIDANCE NOTE

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR LOCAL EDUCATION GROUPS

Mandated by national governments, local education groups usually include the creation of formal terms of reference or the equivalent, such as a memorandum of understanding or partnership framework. Such documents serve to formalize the multi-stakeholder forum for dialogue and coordination and articulate its relationship to the countries' education sector. They also outline and communicate to local education group members and the wider education community what the forum does (its goals and functions), and its composition, governance and working arrangements, as well as arrangements for review and learning.



Note to user

This brief guidance note offers a *template* supporting the elaboration, strengthening, or review of local education group terms of reference, whether the group is new or more experienced. The sections and related question-prompts suggest *issues for consideration* based on the [Principles toward Effective Local Education Groups](#) and what other country partnerships have included in their terms of reference ([repository of practices](#)—country examples of terms of reference). The template can be aligned with, or used independently of, a [local education group assessment](#) exercise.

Not all questions in each section need to be answered, although a minimum level of detail is recommended to communicate the value of the local education group through its terms of reference. The sequence of sections is also indicative of the purpose of guidance and can be different in the resulting terms of reference. As country circumstances and contexts are continuously evolving, it may be deemed useful to review the terms of reference every few years as needed.

GUIDING TEMPLATE

Date: [when terms of reference written/revised].

Title: Terms of reference for [name of the local education group]

INTRODUCTION

The introduction should briefly articulate the country context, the local education group mandate, and specific purposes/objectives, as well as any mutually agreed principles and values guiding the partnership. The mandate should ideally be situated in relation to the education sector, including other policy dialogue fora. The strategic value of the group (or dialogue functions at the heart of the group's mandate) should be clearly identified, including the extent and limitations of its decision-making powers.

Context and mandate

- › When was the local education group established, and by whom?
- › What are the dominant education sector context, policy frameworks and development plans within which the group operates?
- › What is/are the mandate/authorities of the group in relation to national education policy and sector plans? Does it have consultative and/or decision making powers?
- › Do organizations exist with a similar mandate? If so, are mechanisms in place to harmonize efforts?

Strategic value-purpose, functions

- › What is the group's value proposition? That is, what types of policy dialogue and joint action are central to its purpose and offer value to education systems?
- › How are partner assets leveraged in realizing this value?

Member values and behaviors

- › What are the values and commitments that group members adhere to (e.g., inclusive dialogue, mobilizing resources, harmonized action, alignment, mutual accountability, etc.)?
- › Are specific behaviors and values expected from members (e.g., trust, reciprocity, collegiality, equality, fairness, transparency, etc.)?

COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP

The local education group's composition and membership eligibility incorporate the principles of inclusiveness, equality, diversity and gender balance. Equally important, all categories of stakeholders and constituencies should know what is expected of their participation in the group to improve the quality of their inputs. If necessary, specific annexes can be developed describing the eligibility of the different local education group working groups (core, thematic, technical) and the specific roles and responsibilities.

Composition and membership eligibility

- › To whom is membership in the local education group open?
- › Are there any eligibility criteria/restrictions on numbers for the core and local education group working groups?¹
- › Are there any rules of rotation for different categories of stakeholders (e.g., for leadership actors)?
- › How long is the period of membership (i.e., is it permanent or for a fixed time period)?
- › Do protocols for exit from the group exist?
- › Will nonmembers be invited to collaborate in group activities, and under what circumstances?

Membership responsibilities

- › What are the expectations toward members? Will they have responsibilities in addition to their attendance at meetings (e.g., related to information exchange prior to meetings, reporting on actions taken, rotating support to coordination, etc.)?
- › Who will facilitate adhesion to these commitments?

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The terms of reference should clarify what the main local education group governance roles are and who is responsible, including any cross-over between the group core and working groups and between national and subnational levels. Articulating group governance roles and arrangements will instill understanding of decision-making authorities and powers (including local education group chair, co-chair, coordinating agency).

Governance structure

- › What is the structure of the group (i.e., does it have a core group, thematic or technical working groups)?
- › Are there any differences in membership between the local education group core and thematic/technical subgroups based on stakeholder constituencies?²
- › What are the authorities, roles and decision-making powers for each of these groups and the relationship between them?

Leadership

- › Who will undertake group governance roles and responsibilities (e.g., chair, co-chair, coordination, or oversight of working arrangements, etc.)?

¹ List permanent, rotating or potential ad hoc members.

² In practical terms, and to support meaningful engagement and efficient membership, it is useful to articulate the difference between membership of the local education group's core sector-related dialogue group and technical/thematic working groups, as well as any differences between permanent and ad hoc membership. This will help to avoid an overly large representation of stakeholders in different meetings, which may undermine the quality of policy dialogue and meeting efficiency.

- › If not assigned as a co-chair, what will be the role of the coordinating agency in the local education group?

Linkages to other governance levels

- › Will efforts be made to distribute governance arrangements at subnational levels?
- › Have any special protocols been foreseen to ensure flexibility in governance arrangements in low-capacity countries and in situations responding to crisis and emergencies?

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The local education group's working arrangements are the organizational backbone of how it functions and therefore impact on the quality of policy dialogue and stakeholder participation in joint action. To this end, the terms of reference should clearly articulate how the group operates in practical terms and who is responsible for what. Some of these details can be specified in annexes. Additional details can be added as the group evolves or as part of its regular review.

Capacities for coordination

- › Is a secretariat or similar entity foreseen for the general day-to-day coordination of the education group's convening work with responsibilities for: facilitating the meeting agenda of the different local education group groups; organizing meetings; timely dissemination of supporting information; following up on agreed action points; general communications; and organizing regular reviews? Where will it be located?
- › Which actors are otherwise responsible for these tasks?³
- › Will secretariat tasks be assigned on a rotating or permanent basis?

Task-related breakdown of working arrangements, roles and responsibilities

Closely related to the above:

Agenda setting

- › How will issues for policy dialogue in the different local education group bodies be decided (i.e., through discussion between governance actors during a periodic/annual review, or as a joint consultation process with all group members)?

Frequency of local education group meetings and follow-up

- › How often is the education group expected to meet during the year (for core and technical/thematic groups)?
- › If meetings are held in person, where will they be held (national or subnational level)?
- › Will there be online spaces for group members to meet in light of the current COVID-19 context? If so, who will be responsible for facilitating these spaces?

³ If different categories of stakeholders have been assigned specific responsibilities in relation to the group's working arrangements, these should be outlined in an annex.

Sharing evidence, information and resources

- › Are regular internal communications foreseen to keep group members aware of the dialogue agenda and joint actions throughout the year (e.g., to generate clarity on timing and expected stakeholder inputs to the core and thematic/technical groups, and transparency in decision making)?
- › Will a knowledge management plan be created to share core documents and facilitate information exchange among members within different groups? Which actors are responsible for its management?
- › Are local education group leaders expected to report back on group activities to the broader membership?

External advocacy and communications

- › Who is responsible for general advocacy and communications around the group's progress in realizing its goals (i.e., related to sector dialogue and joint actions)?

REVIEW AND LEARNING

Regular review helps the local education group leadership and education stakeholders understand whether the group is making progress toward its agreed policy dialogue goals, and whether governance and working arrangements are fit-for-purpose or require adjustment in light of the evolving context to enhance effectiveness. The aims of a review can be achieved as part of broader sector reporting mechanisms, such as joint sector review processes, or through a regular self-assessment.

Review related to local education group's strategic functions

- › How often will the group review and draw learning around progress and value related to policy dialogue objectives and joint actions?
- › Who will facilitate and participate in the review?

Review of group organizational and collaborative capacities

- › Will there be a regular review of the group's governance structure, working arrangements and partnership culture to identify its strengths and bottlenecks to efficiency, so as to ensure a continuum of improvement and meet stakeholder interest and expectations?

ANNEXES

The local education group can provide more in-depth details on elements in the terms of reference through annexes, including:

- Criteria for membership and/or membership list
- Terms of reference for subgroups/thematic groups (if relevant)
- Breakdown of tasks for different actors (related to governance or working arrangements)
- Organigram of sector dialogue and coordination structures
- Conflict of interest arrangements
- References to any key resources for group members Other...