GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 ACCELERATED FUNDING WINDOW*

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for EDUCATION

*The COVID-19 Accelerated Funding window was approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting on March 31, 2020 (BOD/2020/03 DOC 02)

1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD AND FUNDING

Countries Eligible for Accelerated Funding in Response to COVID-19

1.1 Countries eligible for COVID-19 accelerated funding under these guidelines are those that are eligible for education sector program implementation grant (ESPIG) funding, linked to the 2018-2020 GPE eligibility list. These 67 ESPIG-eligible countries are listed in Annex 1.

1.2 All 67 eligible countries are eligible to apply for funding from the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window, including ones that have an existing Accelerated Funding allocation as a result of the Board decision in December 2019. The funding for COVID-19 mitigation and recovery has a different purpose and focus than the Accelerated Funding envelopes announced in December 2019 which support country-level humanitarian appeals. The latter should be used to respond to needs identified in humanitarian response plans and flash appeals.

Implementation Period

1.3 The implementation period for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding is 12 to 18 months. It is expected that resources are used for activities to mitigate and recover from the COVID crisis as identified in a publicly available government response plan.

Amount of funding

1.4 The amount of accelerated funding to address urgent needs and early recovery activities related to COVID-19 is outlined in Annex 1.

1.5 At this time the GPE fund will only make US$250 million available to the new COVID-19 accelerated funding window, and out of that US$225 million for grants to countries. This will primarily cover the first applications that are received.

Activities Eligible for Funding

1.6 The COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window supports GPE countries to deliver interventions included in their publicly available government response plan to COVID that enable learning to continue and education systems to   recover from school closures. As requested by the GPE Board, applications should clearly demonstrate the link with the response plan that determines the need for these funds, ability to utilize them within the implementation timeframe, and a focus on the most vulnerable. While immediate mitigation measures are eligible, the expected

focus of the accelerated funding would be on the recovery phase.

Illustrative examples of support: from mitigation to recovery and reopening of schools

1. Production of learning continuity programs broadcast through radio, tv, and online, and the provision of resources such as radios, textbooks, study guides and equipment to the poorest. This can be accompanied through free call-in numbers for asking questions, or through establishing a remote tutoring service using toll-free numbers at a local level.

2. Ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and teachers; make sure that children with special educational needs and disabilities are included in continuity of learning programs. Provide appropriate psycho-social support to children and teachers.

3. Conducting sample assessments at different grade levels to track progress in key areas like early grade literacy and numeracy and key subjects at secondary. This is essential to know who is being reached and how well students are learning so that interventions can be adapted accordingly.

4. The poorest will be affected the most by economic shocks (household income in Sierra Leone fell from US$336 to US$131 during the Ebola epidemic and there was an increase in girls getting pregnant). Interventions will likely be needed to protect the poorest and most vulnerable and enable them to continue learning, such as conditional cash transfers.

5. Officials and teachers may have been on other duties or forced to leave their jobs. Crisis and post- crisis education budgets will be under pressure but for rapid and effective recovery national systems must keep their teachers. It is essential to support them through the crisis, enable them to support continuity of learning and prepare them for recovery and reopening as well as addressing recruitment gaps if these emerge.

6. Schools may have been used for other purposes and may need refurbishing and require new supplies of books and equipment. Reopening will need to be planned and prepared for with health and wellbeing ensured.

7. The closure of schools, even with mitigation measures, will result in slower learning progress. The poorest are likely to fall further behind their richer peers. When schools reopen, large-scale assessment can identify learning gaps and inform remedial programming and learning opportunities so that all children catch up to grade level rapidly.

2. PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION AND APPROVAL

Step 1: Initiating the Process

2.1 The Government or the Coordinating Agency informs the Secretariat of their intention to apply and provides a timeline for the submission of their application to the GPE Secretariat.

Step 2: Designation of a Grant Agent

2.2 The government, in consultation with the local education group (LEG) and, where it exists, the education cluster, selects a grant agent to support implementation of the emergency and early recovery program related to COVID-19. If a grant agent has been selected for the 'regular' Accelerated Funding window announced in December 2019, which supports country-level humanitarian appeals, the government can decide to maintain this grant agent for the COVID-19 accelerated funding, provided that said grant agent is available and has the capacity to serve in this role. In other cases, the process should be open and transparent, but with reduced timeline to allow for rapid response. Particular attention should be paid to the agency's ability to support timely application and implementation of the program.

2.3 To avoid delays in the transfer of funds, grant agents must be selected among agencies that have a Transfer Agreement for the GPE Fund executed prior to the submission of the application. Pre-accredited international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are eligible to become grant agents, and the Board of Directors has waived the requirement for a formal grant-level assessment of INGOs for allocations above US$5 million, noting the Secretariat will assess risk as part of the review of any such allocations. Within those considerations, selection of the grant agent can be further guided by the GPE grant agent standard selection process[1].

Step 3: Development of the proposal

2.4 The grant agent develops a proposal in close collaboration with the government, the LEG and, where it exists, the education cluster. The format and internal approval process of the proposal follows the grant agent's internal procedures for emergency assistance programs. While there is no template for proposals, the cover note for COVID accelerated funding applications should accompany the application.

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[1] https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/standard-selection-process-grant-agents

2.5 The proposal must:

    a. be based on the publicly available government response plan related to COVID-19;

    b. provide information on the sources of financing for COVID response and early recovery activities planned and information demonstrating that GPE funds will be complementary to government or other donor funding, including from Education Cannot Wait, where relevant; and

    c. provide information on targeting and equity, notably how needs of most vulnerable including girls will be addressed

    d. indicate activities, budgets, results framework, implementation modalities in line with program standards attached in Annex 2.

2.6 Countries can combine their applications for ESPIGs, regular and COVID-19 Accelerated Funding. However, in these cases, the shorter COVID-19 approval process can only be applied on the COVID-19 accelerated funding request. In the program document, COVID-19 activities and costs including program management should be clearly delineated from the 'regular' Accelerated Funding and/or ESPIG. Moreover, implementation timelines for the COVID-19 accelerated funding portion need to be clearly indicated to allow assessment of their timeliness.

Step 4: Application submission

2.7 The LEG, and where it exists the Education Cluster, must endorse the proposal, virtually when needed. LEG and where it exists the Education Cluster should be consulted on a draft proposal, either through a (virtual) meeting, or by sharing it with members for their feedback. Due to the emergency setting, timelines for consultation and endorsement can be shortened, though this should be compensated by clear communication on timing of the consultation and endorsement. Government and grant agent should work closely with the coordinating agency on timing and timelines. The Secretariat will confirm with the Coordinating Agency that consultation and endorsement has happened.

2.8 The Coordinating Agency is expected to submit the application package to gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org with copy to the DCP Focal Point, the Grant Agent and the Secretariat Country Lead. Depending on circumstances, the DCP Focal Point or the Grant Agent can submit the package as long as the two other parties are copied in the communication.

2.9 The application package must include:

- The proposal
- The cover note
- The government approved response/recovery plan related to COVID-19

Step 5: Application review and decision

2.10   The Secretariat conducts a final readiness review of the application package, with due attention to the relevance, quality and feasibility of the planned activities in line with the program standards in Annex 2 and prepares a summary for decision.

2.11   The CEO will review the application package for COVID-19 accelerated funding and make a decision.

Step 6: Transfer of funds

2.12   Following approval, the Secretariat conveys the approval to the Trustee. The Trustee will send a commitment letter to the designated grant agent, who will in turn request a transfer of funds.

Anticipated Timeframes

Activity	Estimated Timeframe
Step 1: Initiating the process	1-2 weeks
Step 2: Designation of a grant agent	
Step 3: Development of the proposal	1-2 weeks
Step 4: Application submission	
Step 5: Application review by Secretariat and CEO approval	2-3 weeks
Step 6: Transfer of funds	1 week

3. REPORTING AND REVISIONS

3.1 The Policy on ESPIGs applies to Accelerated Funding programs, notably Part IV (Reporting requirements) and Part V (Revisions to programs).

3.2 For COVID Accelerated Funding grants, the Grant Agent will be required to fill out bimonthly a survey which will request core data on program implementation.

3.3 In terms of reporting on the full results framework of the program, as per the Policy on ESPIGs, for programs with an implementation period of less than 18 months, the first progress report essentially serves as an implementation completion report.[2] The report should be submitted within 6 months of the closing date of the program. Only in case the implementation period is more than 18 months, a progress report on the first 12 months needs to be submitted.

3.4 The standardized template for progress reports should be used. This template should also be used as an implementation completion report template.

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[2] Guidance note on implementation grant progress and completion reports for grant agents

ANNEX 1. COUNTRY ALLOCATION AMOUNTS LINKED TO SCHOOL AGED POPULATION

Up to US$20 million	Bangladesh, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Uganda, Tanzania
Up to US$15 million	Afghanistan, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Sudan, Yemen
Up to US$10 million	Burundi, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Rep, Eritrea, Guinea, Haiti, Lao PDR, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Somalia, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Up to US$5 million	Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Lesotho, Mauritania, Timor-Leste
Up to US$1 million	Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Dominica, Grenada, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

ANNEX 2. PROGRAM QUALITY STANDARDS

To be distributed separately