Terms of Reference: Short-Term Consultant (Grant Agent Selection)

GPE Secretariat – Grant Operations

BACKGROUND

Are you a very passionate advocate for education? Do you want to make a difference in the lives of children? The Global Partnership for Education Secretariat (GPE) would like to hear from you.

Who We Are
GPE is a shared commitment to end the world’s learning crisis. It is the only global partnership and fund dedicated entirely to helping children in lower-income countries get a quality education, so they can unlock their potential and contribute to building a better world.

We bring together governments, teachers, civil society, donors, United Nations agencies, development banks, businesses and private foundations to transform education systems so that every girl and boy can have hope, opportunity and agency.

What We Do
GPE helps low- and lower-middle-income countries to build stronger education systems so that all children can get the education they need to thrive. We currently support nearly 90 countries where the needs are greatest and focus on reaching the children who are the most vulnerable, including girls, children with disabilities and those affected by extreme poverty or conflict.

Our unique approach works. Since 2002, 160 million more children in GPE partner countries have set foot in classrooms for the first time, more than half of them girls. GPE is also the largest provider of education grants in the global COVID-19 response, providing partner countries with vital resources to ensure that learning can safely continue.

How We Work
GPE is working to help governments transform their education systems to get the most vulnerable children in school, improve teaching and learning, and build equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century. Between 2020–2025, GPE will support transformative change in up to 90 countries and territories, which are home to 1 billion children.

Transforming education is about creating lasting changes and achieving impact at scale. GPE sets out to deliver this transformative change by convening partners, mobilizing funds and catalyzing reforms to help partner countries accelerate access, learning outcomes and gender equality.

Raise Your Hand
In July 2021, the Global Education Summit put GPE firmly on the path to be fully-funded by 2025, by raising a record US $4 billion from donors for GPE’s Raise Your Hand campaign. At the Summit, Heads of State and Government from partner countries made historic commitments to education financing and GPE also mobilized an unprecedented number of pledges from businesses, private foundations and development banks.

A fully funded GPE would support transformed education systems in up to 90 countries and territories, enable up to 175 million children to learn and help get 88 million more girls and boys in school by 2025. In the longer term, this investment could add $164 billion to economies in GPE partner countries, lift 18 million people out of poverty, and protect 2 million girls from early marriage.

**Governance And Organizational Arrangements**
The GPE Board of Directors includes high-level board members and alternates representing 20 constituencies that reflect the Partnership’s breadth. The Board Chair is HE President Jakaya Kikwete and the Board Vice Chair is Dr Susan Liautaud. The Board of Directors, with its three standing committees, provides policy and strategic oversight and approves or delegates funding decisions.

The GPE Secretariat, with 160 employees and hosted by the World Bank, is responsible for translating the policies and strategies set by the Board into practical support for partner countries, coordinating with diverse stakeholders and galvanizing global support for SDG4. The Secretariat’s headquarters are in the World Bank’s offices in Washington, D.C. and the European office is in Paris with a satellite office in Brussels.

**ABOUT THE TEAM**
The Finance & Grant Operations (FGO) team focuses on fiduciary matters, grant processing, monitoring and administration, risk, innovative financing, and trustee finance.

The Grant Operations sub team aims to provide support to help partner countries efficiently access grant funding, and together with their grant agents deal with barriers to program implementation.

**ABOUT THE JOB**
This consultancy will be remote but may include days in person in Paris or Washington, DC if business needs arise that make it necessary to do so.

GPE offers different types of grants to support education system transformation in partner countries. The main grant is the System Transformation Grant (up to US$ 162.5 million) which finances a prioritized reform that removes bottlenecks and enables system transformation. In 30 countries where girl’s education has been identified as the main challenge, this can be
complemented by a Girls’ Education Accelerator which provides additional resources to support gender equality. In addition, countries can access a smaller System Capacity Grant (up to US$ 5 million) which provides funding to support government capacity strengthening, as well as a Multiplier Grant which helps crowd in additional financing for education. Partner countries receive GPE funding through grant agents who are accountable for the use of the resources throughout the grant’s duration.

The government and partners begin by carrying out an enabling factors analysis of four critical factors for system transformation. This analysis is the basis for a dialogue among partners, and led by the government, to develop a partnership compact that identifies the critical bottlenecks to transformation. The enabling factors include sector coordination that covers better alignment of aid with national systems and pooling of development partner resources to reduce aid fragmentation. The government and partners must agree on the scope of work for the GPE grant program and preferred implementation modalities, including as much alignment and joint financing with country systems as possible to ensure optimal system strengthening.

The grant agent(s) are selected once the partners agree on a partnership compact. Grant agent(s) are selected by the government, with the assistance of the coordinating agency and the endorsement of the local education group. The process follows GPE’s guidelines for grant agent selection to ensure openness and transparency.

For the System Transformation Grant and the Girls’ Education Accelerator in particular, identifying the partner(s) best placed to support the country’s priority for transforming the education system is critical to the grants’ successful implementation. Before considering options for who the best grant agent might be, the government and partners must agree on a scope of work for the grant program, as well as preferred implementation modalities, including as much alignment and joint financing with country systems as possible, to ensure optimal system strengthening. As such, grant agents are selected once a target reform area is agreed and a financing modality is determined and outlined in a partnership compact.

Based on a desk review, the Secretariat sees increasing adherence to the grant selection guidelines for the System Transformation Grant and Girls Education Accelerator. In most cases the incumbent grant agent is reinstated. Citing concerns with the concentration of grant agents in one or two organizations, the GPE Board requested that the Secretariat identify options for diversifying the organizations serving as grant agent. Moreover, the Secretariat has received other concerns with the process that, in some cases, are creating tensions among the partners. The Secretariat therefore seeks an independent qualitative evaluation of the current grant agent selection process to see whether and how it can be further strengthened to address concerns raised and to increase grant agent diversification.
The consultant will examine the grant agent selection under GPE 2025 and conduct at least five in-depth case studies of the grant agent selection process for System Transformation Grants and Girls’ Education Accelerator Grants. The in-depth study will include interviewing key stakeholders such as government representatives, coordinating agencies, the prospective grant agents involved, and a sample of partners (such as bilateral and multilateral organizations and CSOs) present in the local education group who were involved in the grant agent selection process. The consultant will also canvass eligible organizations that decided not to nominate themselves as grant agent. The consultant will then propose options and recommendations for any changes to the GPE grant agent selection process and simplified and/or clearer guidelines which may include expectations around behaviors of stakeholders.

**Timeframe**
The contract will be for 30 days. The consultant is expected to start in September 2023.

**Deliverables**
An inception report which proposes a sample of country cases that will be assessed and explains the methodology to be followed during the evaluation. It is expected that the proposed sample will include at least one country from French-speaking Africa and from a non-African country.

A final report includes the following:
- Names of GPE partner countries examined, including names of partner organizations interviewed.
- The study approach and interview questions used.
- Key findings from the study including challenges and bottlenecks.
- How the process for grant agent selection for the grants studied compares to GPE’s current process and guidelines.
- Suggestions on how to improve GPE’s current grant agent selection process and guidelines, including recommendations around managing transparency and ways to achieve a greater diversification of grant agents, and any feedback relating to GPE’s grant agent accreditation process.
- Draft amendments to the current grant agent selection process and guidelines.
- Draft updates to dissemination material on how to communicate on GPE’s grant agent selection process and guidelines to help further strengthen understanding and adherence to the process.

**Reporting Relationship**
The consultant will report to the Grant Operations Team Lead.

**SELECTION CRITERIA**

- Master’s degree in education, economics, international development or a relevant related field.
• At least 20 years of meaningful experience, including solid experience at country levels in identification and formulation, grant implementation and supervision, risk management monitoring, evaluation and joint policy dialogue.
• A wide and diversified scope of experience, across several countries and different development partners.
• Experience with GPE processes and grants, preferably at country levels.
• Strong experience in aid effective financing and funding modalities. Strong communication skills to work with organizations and individuals to solve problems and to troubleshoot.
• Ability to build trust in a culturally diverse environment and ability to exercise discretion.
• English and French are required.

GPE is committed to achieving diversity in terms of race, gender, nationality, culture, and educational background. Individuals with disabilities and nationals of GPE developing country partners are equally encouraged to apply.

Interested candidates may send their resumes along with cover letters to ayang2@globalpartnership.org