



# **Girls' Education Skills Partnership Challenge Fund Request for Proposals Guidance for Applicants**



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## Section 1: Key information for applicants

### 1.1 Objectives of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to partnerships who wish to apply for Girls' Education Skills Partnership (GESP) funding to implement Challenge Fund projects. Details of the rationale for these projects and what they are expected to achieve are given in the Concept Note in Annex A.

It is important that all prospective applicants carefully review the concept note along with these guidance notes and the proposal form before completing their proposal. GESP proposal form and budget templates accompanies this document in Annex B. All proposals must be submitted to [Mostafa.al-mossallami@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Mostafa.al-mossallami@fcdo.gov.uk) by 14.00 (UK time) on 16 September 2022.

### 1.2 List of key documents needed

In order to be considered for funding all proposals must include the following:

- A) A completed proposal form, which must be submitted by the lead partner no later than 14.00 (UK time) on 16 September 2022
- B) A completed Budget template
- C) A letter or other signed official document showing senior level institutional authorisation by the lead partner organisation for submission of the application and, if approved, participation in GESP
- D) CVs of the key personnel from the lead partner organisation who will be directly involved in delivering the GESP project
- E) CVs of the lead person from each of the other confirmed partners involved in project delivery.

### 1.3 Summary of key terms

- A) *Programme* (referring to GESP): the totality of projects implemented with GESP funding.
- B) *Partnership*: formal collaboration among a group of public and/or private organisations that address the demand for skills development for adolescent girls in ways, and at a scale, that a single organisation could not. Partnerships may include, but are not restricted to, education and skills Institutions, private sector companies (as employers, investors or suppliers), NGOs Youth led organisations and public sector agencies involved in education and skills. Partners may be from the target countries or from other countries that have valuable experience to share. We encourage youth-led initiatives, beneficiary representation and local ownership.
- C) *Lead partner*: the institution that submits the application on behalf of the partnership and takes responsibility for managing the inputs and delivering the outputs of the proposed project. The lead partner is also responsible for managing the finances of their partnership and is accountable to the GESP Fund Manager (Generation Unlimited) for the use of GESP funds.
- D) *Lead person*: the individual from each institution who will lead and co-ordinate the inputs of that institution to the GESP funded project.



- E) *Project*: the integrated matrix of activities undertaken by the partnership to deliver the outputs and outcomes described in the proposal.
- F) *Proposal/application (used interchangeably)*: the proposed project described by the partnership in the application form.
- G) *Eligibility requirements*: the criteria that MUST be met by any partnership for their application to be considered for funding (see Section 2.2 and Section 2.3 below).
- H) *Selection criteria*: the features of the application that will be assessed to determine which proposals will be selected for funding (see Section 4.2 below).
- I) *Due diligence*: a review of the institutional and financial record of the proposed partners, especially the lead partner, to ensure that they have the appropriate background, experience and systems to deliver a GESP project.

**1.4 Partner selection**

It is a requirement of GESP that projects are implemented by partnerships, as defined above. However, it is important that those partnerships consist of organisations that each have a distinct role to play in the delivery of the projects. While all partners will contribute to effective implementation, the lead partner will have contractual responsibility for delivering the proposed project, if approved. The roles and reciprocal obligations of each partner should be clearly defined, and no partner should be included unless they have a clearly defined role.



## 2.1 Challenge fund partnerships

Further details are given in the Concept Note (Annex A), which should be read in conjunction with these guidance notes.

## 2.2 Eligibility for challenge fund partnerships

To be eligible to apply for funding for these projects, applicants must meet all the general eligibility requirements set out below and the following:

- A) Applicants must provide evidence that there is a demand for their proposed intervention and that the applicant possesses the practical experience and networks to reach the target beneficiaries. However, this experience may be provided by any member organisation of the partnership, not necessarily by the lead partner.
- B) The lead organisation in the partnership must have previous or current experience delivering skills interventions directly to young people, with a preference for skills interventions specific to adolescent girls and young women.
- C) Organisations must show how they work with and engage youth in solutions.

## 2.3 Eligibility requirements

No application will be considered for funding without passing ALL of the eligibility requirements listed below.

### *Partners*

- A) A lead partner must be legally registered for a minimum of two years and has the right to undertake activity proposed in the partnership. This is intended to show that the lead partner is well established and suitable to manage the partnership.
- B) Certified audited accounts for the last two years must be available on request.
- C) Proof that the organisation is a legal entity in its country of operation must be available on request.
- D) Partnership must include at least two organisations, at least one of which is legally entitled to operate in each country where activity will take place. This is to ensure that if the proposal is selected, it will be possible to implement it.
- E) Written evidence of legal status of each organisation in the country of operation must be available on request.
- F) Confirmation that the lead and other partners are not involved in or propose activities that:
  - encourage or lead to civil unrest
  - are linked to any terrorist organisation
  - have any direct links to a political party
  - discriminate against any groups on the basis of gender, disability, race, colour, ethnicity, religion or social standing
- G) Any breach of the above contravenes FCDO and UNICEF funding rules. Signature of the application form by all partners will be deemed to mean that this criterion is met. Any evidence to the contrary will lead to immediate disqualification.



- H) At least two of the partners, including the lead partner, have worked successfully together in the last five years. This is to demonstrate that a viable partnership exists in order to deliver the proposal.
- I) Evidence within application of an established working relationship between the lead and other partners.

*Activities*

- J) The activity proposed has been used successfully by members of the partnership in other situations. This is to enable project implementation with the minimum possible delay
- K) Evidence of prior implementation of the proposed methodology. The lead partner has experience of managing the finances of projects of a similar size. This is to provide assurance that project funds will be managed effectively
- L) The activities proposed must be focused on the themes and countries specified in the call

*Authorisation*

- M) Lead and other partners must demonstrate senior level institutional authorisation. This is to ensure that there is institutional support for the proposal and engagement in GESP from all partners
- N) Official signed letter from each partner organisation giving senior level authorisation to submit the application for GESP funding

*Application*

- O) Applications and all supporting material must be submitted in English
- P) The language of the GESP project is English

*Experience*

- Q) The lead and/or other partners must show experience of delivering relevant donor funded projects. If not, then risk should be shared by offering at least 50% co-funding. To give assurance that applicants are familiar with the way donors work and the compliance required.

**2.4 Timing**

The invitation to submit proposals for a project opens on Friday 1 July and closes at 14.00 (UK time) on 16 September 2022. Once applications have been screened for eligibility and reviewed against selection criteria, final selection will take place by the end of September 2022. Successful partnerships will be expected to commence implementation in November 2022.

Note: this will not be the only opportunity to apply for grant funds from the GESP programme. There are plans for a further open call for proposals in 2023.

**2.5 Value/duration**

The value of the GESP grant will be based on the needs of the proposed project and the budget submitted by the applicants. Projects between the value of £750,000 up to £1.5million (GBP) will be



considered, however the upper limit should not be regarded as a 'target'. Proposals will be assessed according to the impact they will have and providing value for money will also be a major consideration. Projects are expected to be delivered over a three or four year period, depending on the need and project design.

Sustainability of the project's outcomes beyond the period of GESP funding will be an important consideration when assessing proposals.

## **2.6 Partnership composition and management**

Partnerships must include at least one institution or organisation legally entitled to operate in each focus country included in the proposal. Partnerships may, but do not have to, include institutions from the UK or the Global North.

Each partnership must have a 'lead partner', which will be the recipient of the GESP grant. The lead partner will be responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the other partners and for managing and accounting for all of the partnership's finances. The lead partner does not have to be an education institution; neither does it have to be based in one of the focus countries, although this would be advantageous. The lead partner should be the organisation agreed by all partners as the most appropriate member to undertake the leadership and administrative management role.

Organisations can submit multiple applications. However, consideration should be given to the quality of each proposal and each one should be substantively different (including lead person and partner organisations).

### ***Conflicts of interests***

Projects cannot include any GESP Board members in the partnership composition, including Generation Unlimited (please reference concept note for the full list of companies partnered on GESP).

UN agencies, including Unicef, may apply for funding and can be included in partnerships, either as a lead or a member of GESP challenge fund projects.

The lead partner should complete the application form.

If you have any questions regarding the application form please contact [davelyn.thompson@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:davelyn.thompson@fcdo.gov.uk)

The lead partner must prepare and submit a budget for delivering the proposed activities as part of the application (template provided). This should be as realistic as possible but note that a more detailed budget will be required if the application is approved, in principle, for funding.

The lead partner must ensure that all the key documents mentioned in section 1.2 above are attached alongside the application form.

Applications must be submitted no later than 14.00 (UK time) on 16 September 2022.



All applications will be screened for eligibility and those that are eligible will be assessed and evaluated against the selection criteria shown below. The most promising proposals will be put onto a shortlist for further evaluation and comparison.

**Shortlisted applicants**

For any applications making it onto the final shortlist, a due diligence appraisal will be conducted.

Applicants may be asked to prepare a narrative concept note describing the process by which their proposed project will deliver the intended outcomes as well as being invited to an interview or video conference call to provide further details.

Please note that all eligible applicants will receive written feedback on the outcome of their proposals by September/early October 2022. There is no right of appeal should applicants wish to question any decision or judgement by the selection panel.

If you have any questions or require clarification, please contact the GESP team [davelyn.thompson@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:davelyn.thompson@fcdo.gov.uk)

**Section 3: Submitting an application**

**3.1 Process**

1. The applications will initially be assessed against the eligibility requirements detailed above. This is a pass or fail process. Ineligible applications will not be assessed further.
2. If all eligibility requirements are met, the application will be assessed against the selection criteria below.
3. Following assessment against the selection criteria, an initial shortlist will be further assessed prior to determination of the final shortlist. Should interviews be needed to inform the assessment, GESP will endeavour to provide shortlisted applicants with a week’s notice prior to this interview, although this cannot be guaranteed. Applicants who decline the interview may be removed from the shortlist.
4. The final shortlist will then be subject to a due diligence check on the lead partners. Following due diligence, a final selection of partnerships to be funded will take place.

**3.2 Selection criteria**

Proposals that meet the eligibility requirements will be assessed and scored against the selection criteria below, organised into four groups and weighted as shown.

**A. Relevance, innovation and quality of proposed project (35%)**

- A1. Quality of proposal (nature of the skills intervention)
- A2. Approach to employability
- A3. Targeted beneficiaries

**B. Competency and capacity of partnership (25%)**





- B1. Clarity of partnership roles and capacity
- B2. Experience in collaboration
- B3. Team quality/suitability
- B4. Composition of partnership

**C. Plausible outcomes, planning, finance and risk (20%)**

- C1. Clarity of outcomes, plausible pathway and M&E for initial deliverables
- C2. Quality of implementation and financial plans
- C3. Assessment and mitigation of risk
- C4. Value for money

**D. Sustainability and cross-cutting issues (20%)**

- D1. Sustainability through local capacity and ownership
- D2. Scalability/transformational potential
- D3. Affordability
- D4. Equity of access: gender/disadvantaged groups

**3.3 Communicating outcomes**

If your application is unsuccessful, we will write to you with the reasons for this.

If your proposal is approved, then GESP will enter into a grant agreement with the partnership for the duration of the implementation period.

**3.4 Implementation planning**

During the inception phase, the applicant, with the support of the GESP team, will be expected to develop and provide the following:

- a detailed plan of work with associated inputs, outputs and outcomes
- a fully developed financial plan with costs allocated to activities and outputs
- a monitoring and evaluation plan including a value for money strategy
- an expanded theory of change with log frame
- additional information for the due diligence process (if needed).

**Section 4: Guidance on completing the application form**

**Part 1: Eligibility and Checklist**

- Please answer yes or no to all the eligibility questions. If you cannot answer ‘yes’ to all of them, your partnership is not eligible to apply for GESP grant funding. Please refer to the



eligibility criteria in section 2 of these guidance notes to ensure that your application will be considered.

**Application form requirements**

**Part 2: Project summary**

It is recommended that this high-level summary is completed when you have filled in the rest of the application form.

1. Project title. Please give your proposed project a short title (15 words maximum), that embodies what it is trying to achieve.
2. Partnership members. Please indicate who the lead institutional partner will be, and the country where it is based. Please also list the other partner organisations that will be involved in delivering your project.
3. Project purpose. In no more than 100 words, please say what your project aims to achieve. Try to write this in such a way that someone who knows nothing about it can understand your vision.
4. Countries of implementation. Please state the focus country or countries (Bangladesh and/or Nigeria) where project activities will take place. These are likely to be where the principal beneficiaries are based.
5. Immediate beneficiaries. The principal target group for your project should be adolescent girls and young women aged 13-25 - please estimate their numbers. They may be learners/students, teachers, administrators or another group. However, if your proposal aims to bring about changes in a systemic way and this question is not applicable, please say so.
6. Project duration. GESP projects are generally expected to run for three to four years, but the actual duration will depend on the needs of the project. However, no project should be proposed that cannot deliver observable benefits within five years.
7. Estimated costs. This information should be derived from the draft work plan and costing that you complete as part of your application. Great accuracy is not required at this stage, but you are expected to be able to provide a realistic estimate. On the three successive rows, please show:
  - A. the total monetary 'value' of your project based on the estimated cost of delivering it and the added value of in-kind contributions
  - B. the amount of this that you expect to get from other sources (as direct financial support or 'in kind')
  - C. the amount requested from the GESP budget (a–b).

**Part 3: Your partnership**

**3.1 Lead partner**



Every partnership must have a 'lead partner', who will be the recipient of the GESP grant. The lead partner will be responsible and accountable for co-ordinating the activities of the other partners and for managing and accounting for all of the partnership's finances.

The lead partner should complete the application form in consultation with all the other partners so that all partnership members are aware of what is being proposed.

Please complete the form as indicated.

**Project lead person:** This should be the person from the lead partner organisation who will take primary responsibility for project implementation. They will be the principal point of contact for the GESP fund managers and will be expected to deliver the required reports on their project's progress.

**Senior representative of the institution or organisation:** This should be someone from the lead partner organisation who has the formal authority to commit that organisation's resources to participate in the proposed project. They should provide a signed letter or other official document indicating their approval for this application for GESP funding.

### **3.2 Other partners**

We recognise that the 'partnership' that is applying for GESP funding may not be fully formed at the time of application. We would therefore like you to list separately the institutions or organisations that are confirmed partners, and those that are planned partners.

### **3.3 Partnership information**

**3.3.1** Please provide details of how or why you formed the relationships with your confirmed partners and how long you have been working together. Also say why you are interested in delivering a GESP project.

**3.3.2** This section asks you to explain the roles that the lead partner and each of the other confirmed partners will play in project implementation. It is important that each has a clear and complementary role and that they have the knowledge and experience to perform that role effectively.

**3.3.3** Please provide similar details for any planned partners.

**3.3.4** While GESP can provide significant funding to support innovative and transformative projects, it also wishes to attract co-funding from other sources that have a mutual interest in those projects. This co-funding may be in the form of direct financial support, the provision of infrastructure or equipment, or the provision of time or services at no cost to the GESP budget. Please provide any details that you can.

### **3.4 Relevant experience**

The lead partner must provide evidence that they have the necessary experience to manage the implementation of the project being proposed. This should include experience of managing partners, finances, delivery, monitoring, and reporting of activities and outputs.



The lead partner must provide details of up to three relevant donor-funded projects that they have been involved in, or led, during the last ten years. ‘Donor funding’ in this respect does not refer exclusively to international aid donors, but can include foundation, charity or other funding on a similar scale that involves the same level of accountability for project and financial management.

Other confirmed partners may also have relevant experience that will add to the strength of the proposal. Details of this experience should be provided on the separate ‘partner information’ form.

**3.5 Project and partnership management**

Please provide the information requested on the application form with the CVs of the named personnel from the lead partner only.

3.5.3 The Team Leader is likely to be the most important member of the delivery team, who will carry most responsibility for effective project implementation. You therefore need to provide a summary of their relevant project management experience including:

- 1. their experience of managing donor-funded projects targeted at low-income countries
- 2. working effectively in and/or leading partnerships with other institutions/organisations
- 3. being accountable for relatively large amounts of funding (over £200,000), and demonstrating good financial management
- 4. monitoring, evaluation and reporting of project outputs and outcomes
- 5. engaging with external stakeholders and influencing policy and practice.

**3.6 project team**

Please follow the instructions on the application form, providing details of the relevant knowledge and experience of the key members of the project delivery team, other than the Team Leader. These individuals may be from any of the partnership’s member organisations.

**Part 4: Your project**

**4.1 Project name.**

Please give your proposed project a short title (15 words maximum), that embodies what it is trying to achieve.

**4.2 Project objectives.**

Please provide a brief description of what your project aims to achieve, making it clear how it will improve the skills and employability of adolescent girls and young women.

**4.3 Why is your project needed?**

Please refer to any specific research or needs analysis that has informed your proposal.

**4.4 Opportunities for innovation**



One of the key features of the GESP programme is that it will introduce new and innovative ideas to the education and skills environment in the countries where it operates. Please therefore explain, briefly, what kind of innovation your proposed project will introduce.

Applicants are encouraged to consider the range of services and support offered by GESP’s private sector partners – including electronic devices, online content, mentoring, access to employability opportunities, and include if and how their proposed projects will want to incorporate this into the project implementation.

**4.5 Theory of change**

To be considered for funding under the GESP programme, all proposals must clearly articulate a plausible pathway to positive impact on their focus populations or systems within a short- to medium-term timeframe (three to ten years). You are not required, at this stage, to present a full theory of change or logical framework for your project, but you are required to identify how your proposed inputs and outputs will deliver the outcomes and impact desired (please reference the GESP Theory of Change and KPIs in the concept note).

4.5.1 Inputs: these may include activities, such as training programmes, production of educational materials, provision of equipment, negotiation and signing of agreements, or anything else that will be required to implement your project.

4.5.2 Outputs: these are the immediate products of the proposed activities.

4.5.3 Intermediate outcomes: these are the things that the outputs of your project are designed to produce within three to five years.

4.5.4 This section asks you to articulate the plausible pathway between the outputs of your project and the projected outcomes, and the assumptions this is based on.

4.5.5 Please say what impact your project may have on the country or countries in which it is implemented over a five to 15-year timeframe.

4.5.6 Please articulate how this impact could be achieved and mention the assumptions that underpin this.

**4.6 Risk assessment and mitigation**

Please identify any major risks that could prevent you from achieving your project’s objectives and the measures you will use to mitigate these risks.

**4.7 Project beneficiaries and stakeholders**

In this section you are asked to identify who will benefit from your project and what their benefits will be:

- immediate or primary beneficiaries: E.g., learners, trainers, teachers, technicians or administrators.
- downstream or secondary beneficiaries: if, for example, the immediate beneficiaries have been trainers, the secondary beneficiaries are likely to be their students or trainees



- other stakeholders and beneficiaries: should include any groups of people, institutions or organisations that have an interest in your project and will ultimately benefit from it.

**4.8 Numbers of immediate beneficiaries per year**

Please do as instructed on the application form. In many cases there may well be considerable numbers of beneficiaries beyond the life of the project itself. This is why you are asked to estimate numbers over a ten year period.

**4.9 Scale-up**

Please do as requested on the application form.

**Part 5: Monitoring, evaluation, value for money, sustainability**

It will be a requirement for the project team to review and assess the progress of the project at regular intervals, and report back to the Fund Manager. These reports will cover both technical and financial aspects of project implementation.

**5.1 Log Frame and establishing baselines**

It will be a requirement, for each project to also have a log frame in addition to the Theory of Change (**Note: you are not required, at this stage, to present a full theory of change or logical framework for your project**). This must include baseline data against which the progress of the project can be measured. Verifiable indicators, means of verification, and risk and assumptions. For any of the key outputs or outcomes for your project, please tell us about any baseline studies or audits that exist, or will be conducted, against which you will be able to measure its success.

**5.2 M&E processes**

Please describe the systems that you have, or will put in place, to monitor the technical progress of your project. Please also show how you will evaluate that progress in terms of timing, quality and cost in comparison with your plans and estimates.

**5.3 Value for Money**

When considering what aspects of your partnership or project may provide particular value for money, you should think about the following areas:

- Economy: minimising the cost of resources used while still maintaining the appropriate quality.
- Efficiency: the relationship between the outputs you produce, and the resources needed to deliver them.
- Effectiveness: the extent to which your objectives are achieved and the relationship between the intended and the actual impact.
- Equity: how your project will reduce the disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged groups.
- Cost-effectiveness: What evidence is there that your approach is the most cost-effective way of delivering the stated project outputs? What are the alternatives?



How will you collect evidence of value for money during project delivery?

**5.4 Other sources of funding**

GESP welcomes the support of other organisations in delivering the transformational change that it wants to bring about. That support may be direct financial support or it may be ‘in-kind’ support, (e.g. the provision of staff time, equipment, buildings, etc.) that adds to the value of the project without adding to the budget required from GESP. Please include any match funding that will be provided by members of your partnership.

**5.5 Sustainability**

This should be a key consideration of any GESP project and will feature as part of the assessment of your proposal. Please therefore answer the questions carefully.

**5.6 Dissemination and knowledge transfer**

Please describe how the project team will share information derived from the project more widely with stakeholders, beneficiaries, and other organisations, so that the lessons learned can be widely applied.

Please also describe the level of engagement with policy makers and appropriate local organisations that you plan to have in your project.

**5.7 Implementation plan**

You are not expected to provide a detailed implementation plan at this stage. That will be required if your project is given approval for funding in principle. However, you must demonstrate in your application that you have a clear idea of what activities would need to be undertaken to implement your project and the time frame in which these would be completed.

**5.8 Financial data**

Similarly, you are not expected to provide a detailed budget or financial plan for your project at this stage. However, you are required to develop a budget estimate based on your draft work plan and the anticipated costs of the major inputs that will be required to deliver the proposed outputs and outcomes of your project.

**5.9 Excluded expenditure. Your proposal should not include costs for the following:**

- land purchase
- major capital expenditure, (e.g., construction or purchase of buildings, purchase of vehicles – any item of major capital expenditure has to be justified as directly contributing to a sustainable outcome linked to the reduction of poverty)
- inflation must not be included as a stand-alone budget line
- contingency fund/costs (genuine unforeseen costs arising during project implementation may be considered on a case-by-case exceptional basis)
- depreciation (this is a book-keeping transaction rather than an actual cost)
- debt repayment



- pre-project costs, (i.e., costs incurred in preparation of the proposal. Only costs incurred after the signing of the grant arrangement can be charged to the programme)
- core costs (only costs which are directly related to the implementation of the partnership can be charged to the programme).
- 'stand-alone' activities, (i.e. activities that are not part of a wider initiative, e.g. one-off conferences, seminars, scholarships, training, exchanges)
- custom duties and tax payments
- sitting fees (or similar) for attendance at meetings
- per diems for subsistence, accommodation, etc. (reasonable, receipted, actual expenditure can be reimbursed instead although certain items may be excluded)
- alcoholic beverages.