

The Girls' Education Challenge – Guidance for the Innovation Window

The **Girls' Education Challenge** will support NGOs, charities and private sector organisations to find better ways to provide education opportunities to marginalised girls in the poorest countries in Africa and Asia. Through a **competitive** process, it will fund projects that focus on **innovative and cost effective ways of getting marginalised girls into primary and lower secondary education, keeping them there, and making sure they learn**. Applicant organisations will have to **demonstrate measurable improvements in the quality of education as well as increased numbers of girls going through school**. It is expected that the Girls' Education Challenge will provide education opportunities to up 1 million girls in total in Africa and Asia over three years.

I. Overview of the Girls' Education Challenge

Despite the efforts of existing bilateral and multilateral programmes and of domestic governments, 39 million girls remain out of primary school across the world, and a much larger number are dropping out and leaving school without basic literacy and numeracy skills. This is not simply due to a lack of resources. Even if more money were made available, it is not clear that traditional approaches can effectively reach these girls.

The Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) has been designed to promote innovative approaches to reaching these marginalised girls, defined as girls aged 6-19 who have either had no access to education or have dropped out of school early and have had limited opportunities to learn. It is structured around two main funding windows:

- A **Step Change Window** for projects in nine focus countries, which will scale up innovative and proven interventions to enable a minimum of 14,000 girls per three year project to stay in primary or secondary school and increase their learning. This window has now closed for Concept Notes.
- An **Innovation Window** for smaller-scale, innovative pilot projects that have the potential to scale up.

The Girls' Education Challenge will also be issued to new private sector partners and others to develop **Strategic Partnerships** with DFID, providing match funding to support projects that explore new ways of improving learning opportunities for girls in remote and/or marginalised communities.

DFID has appointed a Fund Manager to manage the GEC, as well as an independent Evaluation Manager to ensure that robust evaluation is built in from the beginning of the GEC.

The Step Change Window closed for applications on June 8th 2012. The application process for the Innovation Window was opened on the 9th July 2012.

The Innovation Window

The Innovation Window of the Girls' Education Challenge aims to identify and support **promising new ideas that improve learning and the quality of education** provided to marginalised girls. Projects may generate new evidence of successful interventions, demonstrate potential for scale up or relevance to other contexts or explore multi-sector interventions. The Innovation Window is also aimed at new partners (such as local organisations, private sector organisations and others) who do not typically receive donor funding. Successful applications will show innovative and cost effective approaches to benefitting girls.

Proposed projects should complement existing support to education in that country (including DFID bilateral support). The GEC will support, nurture and monitor successful projects, with a view to them scaling up in a sustainable manner beyond the timeframe of funding provided.

The Innovation Window will be open across 22 countries:

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Burma
- DR Congo
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- India
- Kenya
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Nepal
- Nigeria
- Occupied Palestinian Territories
- Pakistan
- Rwanda
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

Funding between **£250,000 and £2 million** per project will be awarded through a competitive process to non-state organisations (including both not-for-profit and for-profit organisations as well as consortia of organisations) for a maximum of 3 years or until March 2016, whichever date is the earliest.

For more details of the background to the GEC, applicants can read the GEC Business Case that sets out DFID's initial thinking for the Challenge. Please note that DFID's thinking has evolved in some areas since the publication of the GEC Business Case. This guidance note reflects the latest thinking in relation to the design of the GEC.

The diagram below provides an overview of the GEC.



2. Application and selection process

The Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) has a two-stage application process:

- **Concept Note** stage. The first step is the submission of a Concept Note form setting out the project idea being proposed for funding. A lead applicant organisation can submit up to a **maximum** of three Concept Notes. The Fund Manager will assess eligibility and overall fit with GEC criteria. DFID will decide which Concept Notes will be invited to move to the next stage and submit Full Applications;
- **Full Application** stage. The Fund Manager will use Full Applications to assess potential projects and DFID will select projects for funding.

Applicants are requested to note the following:

1. **The GEC is a competition and not everyone will be successful.** We expect that we will receive many applications and that the competition for GEC funding will be tough. Please think about your application carefully, take note of the GEC's eligibility and selection criteria, and document clearly why your project should receive GEC support. Please note that your application will be assessed solely on the information submitted in your Concept Note form. Therefore, please ensure you fully answer all the questions included in all sections of the Concept Note form and do not assume that the Concept Note reviewers will use any additional information on your organisation/consortium, or the proposed project.
2. **Submission of Concept Notes.** The period for submission of fully completed Concept Notes is 20th – 29th August 2012. The absolute deadline is 12 noon BST on 29th August 2012. All Concept Notes must be submitted by email to: girlseducationchallenge@uk.pwc.com. We will acknowledge receipt of your Concept Note within three working days.
The Concept Note form must be completed using Arial font size 12, preferably in English. If an applicant wishes to apply in Dari, French, Portuguese or Pashto, they may do so if they have notified the Fund Manager by 15th August 2012.
3. **Fund Manager engagement.** The Fund Manager will be available to support applicants through the Concept Note and Full Application process. This will primarily be through responding to Frequently Asked Questions and issuing standard guidance, which will be made available on DFID's website. At the Full Application stage, the Fund Manager will also provide bespoke support to applicants, where appropriate.
4. **GEC decision making.** DFID will decide which Concept Notes move forward to the next stage and also which applications will ultimately receive funding from the GEC. All projects selected for funding will be subject to approval by the UK Secretary of State for International Development.

Expected timetable for the Innovation Window

Application process stage	Indicative timing
<i>Innovation Window opened</i>	9 July 2012
<i>Period for submission of Concept Notes</i>	20-29 August 2012
<i>Deadline for submission of Concept Notes</i>	29 August 2012
<i>The GEC Fund Manager informs unsuccessful applicants and invites successful applicants to submit a Full Application</i>	28 September 2012
<i>Deadline for submission of Full Applications</i>	30 November 2012
<i>The GEC Fund Manager informs applicants whether their Full Application has been successful or not</i>	8 February 2013
<i>The GEC Fund Manager undertakes due diligence and finalises contracts/ grant agreements with successful applicants</i>	April 2013

3. Eligibility and selection criteria for the Innovation Window

All Project Concept Notes will be reviewed for eligibility before they are scored in more detail. The eligibility review is a pass/fail test, and covers non-financial and financial considerations. The GEC eligibility criteria for the Innovation Window are summarised in the table below, with accompanying explanations.

Eligibility criteria	Comments
<i>Type of applicant</i>	Only non-state organisations, including both not-for-profit and for-profit organisations, may apply.
<i>Countries</i>	Projects can be implemented in the following 22 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. No more than one country should be covered by one project.
<i>Extent of financial support</i>	The total financial support requested for any one project is between £250,000 and £2,000,000.
<i>Project timetable</i>	The proposed project must be implemented and all monies disbursed within 3 years from the date the contract is signed with the applicant or by March 2016, whichever is the earliest.
<i>Concept Note form</i>	The applicant must submit a fully completed Concept Note form by the stipulated deadline, and supply the required accompanying documentation (see section 4 below on GEC applicant information).

After an eligibility review, the Fund Manager and DFID's GEC Team will score each Concept Note, using a set of selection criteria tailored for the Innovation Window. The Innovation Window's project selection criteria are shown in the table below, with accompanying explanations.

The percentages shown in the table are the weightings we will apply when we score Full Applications. During the Concept Note stage, we are particularly keen to understand the experience and track record of the key personnel who would lead your project, and how the project will demonstrate innovation in the education of marginalised girls. While the Concept Note and the Full Applications will be scored using the same selection criteria, the level of detail requested from the applicant at the Full Application stage will be greater.

Table: Selection criteria for the Innovation Window

Criteria and Weighting	Comments
<i>Proposed project team track record and capacity to implement the project</i> 15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How capable is the proposed project team and lead organisation of implementing this project? Does the proposed team and organisation inspire confidence to implement a new and innovative approach in this country context? • If applicable, why have you entered into a partnership, what value will this bring to the project? • If applicable, what are the capabilities and value added of other partners and their personnel involved in this project?
<i>Expected results (learning and retention) and potential for wider impact</i> 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this project aim directly to improve learning and retention rate for marginalised girls? • How credible are the predicted results following scale up? • What is the project's expected impact? What evidence is there to show that the project could work? • What potential impact could the project have on the wider health, economic, and social situation for marginalised girls, and how will this be measured? • Could the project be relevant in other contexts? • Has the project provided sufficient evidence that it is genuinely new and 'additional' – does it complement existing state and donor interventions, rather than overlap with them? Does the project meet an unmet demand? • How robust are the proposed plans to monitor and evaluate the project?
<i>Innovative approach</i> 30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does this project represent a new and innovative partnership for DFID in education service delivery? • To what extent does this project use innovative approaches to deliver the expected results in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the inclusion of marginalised girls in schooling - Keeping girls in education - Increasing learning outcomes? • To what extent does the project involve further support or testing of: i) a new approach or ii) an existing programme that is being altered to respond to the specific demands of educating girls? • Will this project provide new approaches of utilising Payment by Results to increase Value for Money and achieve outcomes? Will it provide new approaches to measuring education outcomes in ways that can inform approaches to Payment by Results? • What level of engagement/funding has this organisation had previously with DFID, if any?
<i>Value for money</i> 15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the project's costs and the expected results compare with other similar initiatives? Assuming the pilot project is successful, what is the expected impact on the girls' learning outcomes and access, and how do these compare with other similar initiatives? • Is there any match funding (in cash or in kind) provided by the applicant?
<i>Relevance for future scale up and plans for post GEC funding</i> 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the plans after this initial small-scale project? Does it involve sustainable exit routes from GEC funding and how feasible are these (e.g. graduating to state funding, to other external funding sources such as donors or charitable foundations, or to a self-financing model)? • What is the ability of the pilot project to be taken to scale? To what extent is this project replicable and scalable? • How innovative is the project in terms of providing a new more sustainable solution to an existing problem? • Is the project likely to receive endorsement and/or other support from the relevant state authorities?

4. GEC applicant information

The following information requirements have been identified for both the Concept Note and Full Application stages. Failure to supply the information listed below will not necessarily exclude an applicant organisation from the process, however a valid reason must be provided as to why this information could not be provided.

Concept Note stage

This information request refers to the **lead organisation** only.

1. The organisation's policy document in respect of child protection (if available).

Full Application stage

If your project is successful at the Concept Note stage, and you are invited to submit a Full Application, information will be requested from both the lead applicant and key partner organisations. Key partner organisations are defined as partners who deliver 20% or more of the overall project.

The following information will be requested from the **lead organisation**:

1. Your business plan for scale-up.
2. Annual reports – last two years (if these are not produced, then financial statements should be provided).
3. Registration documents (supporting the Registration Numbers provided at Concept Note stage).
4. Bank details (e.g. including name of bank; address, bank manager contact details and statement/ letter of good standing).
5. Identification information for key personnel (Board Members, Chief Executive, Finance Director and GEC Project Lead).
6. Organisation's key policy documents (e.g. anti-bribery).
7. Three project references with contact details.
8. Other specific information may be requested following checks undertaken at the Concept Note stage.

The following information will be requested from **key partner organisations** at the Full Application stage:

1. Annual reports – last year only (alternative information as noted above should be provided where annual reports are not produced).
2. Registration documents and numbers (as applicable).
3. Identification information for key personnel (Board Members, Chief Executive, Finance Director and GEC Project Lead).