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ȘI CERCETĂRII
AL REPUBLICII MOLDOVA



WORLD BANK GROUP
Education



REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANTS OPERATIONS MANUAL

SECOND VERSION

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MDL 19.7192 =EUR 1.0000

MDL 17.2040 =USD 1.0000

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1. EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

1.1. Project overview

1. The Government of the Republic of Moldova (GoM), through Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) is implementing the “EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT” (EQIP or Project), financed by the World Bank (the Bank) based on the:

- a. Loan Agreement (or LA) comprising (i) a non-concessional portion in the amount of EUR 36.5 million (USD 40 million equivalent), and (ii) a concessional portion in the amount of USD 10.0 million under the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) on a non-reimbursable basis dated June 30, 2023 and ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova by the Law No. 224/2023, as amended by Amendment No. 1 to LA dated October 10, 2024 and ratified by the Law No. 256/2024 and entered into force on January 9, 2025;
- b. ELP Grant Agreement (or ELP GA) in the amount of USD 5.0 million from the Early Learning Partnership Multi-Donor Trust Fund (ELP) dated June 30, 2023 and ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova by the Law No. 223/2023, as amended by Amendment No. 1 to ELP GA dated October 10, 2024 and ratified by the Law No. 275/2024 and entered into force on January 9, 2025; and
- c. GPE Grant Agreement (or GPE GA) in the amount of USD 4.8 million from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) dated June 30, 2023 and ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova by the Law No. 222/2023, as amended by Amendment No. 1 to GPE GA dated October 10, 2024 and ratified by the Law No. 273/2024 and entered into force on January 9, 2025.

2. Project implementation is planned for a period of six years, from October 2023 to December 2029, which include IBRD and GCFF funding, except for (i) Component 1.3 that will be implemented based on the GPE Grant Agreement Closing Date that is December 31, 2027; and (ii) ELP Grant Agreement Closing Date that is June 30, 2027. The Project is placed within the overarching framework of the GoM strategies for European integration in the areas of education and its commitment to improve the quality of Moldova’s education system.

3. The EQIP supports the GoM’s reform program by financing activities that will (i) improve the learning environment in Participating Institutions, with an emphasis on supporting disadvantaged students; and (ii) strengthen the capacity of the MoER for sector management and refugee response. Through this Project, the Bank will support the GoM in implementing the needed reforms, which include initiatives for:

- a. Improving quality of education and learning environment in targeted institutions, and
- b. Development of the institutional capacity to design, implement and evaluate education reforms and refugee response interventions.

1.2. Project Components

4. The Project is structured around four components as described below:

a) **Part 1. Improve Quality of Teaching Practices.** Improving the quality of teaching through, *inter alia*:

- 1.1. (a) *Development and implementation of:* (i) in-service training for Selected Teachers and Managers on the Professional Standards for Teachers and School Managers; and (ii) scale-up of the assessment of the quality of teaching practices; and
- (b) *Development and implementation of* in-service training for Selected early childhood education (ECE) Teachers and Educators on the ECE Curriculum, including indoor, outdoor, and play-based teaching and learning, and provision of related materials; and carrying out quality assessments of Selected early childhood education and care (ECEC) Service Providers.
- 1.2. *Development, piloting, and implementation of:*
 - (a) A rapid formative assessment in Key Subject Areas for the identification of students and students' learning challenges;
 - (b) A Learning Recovery Program; and
 - (c) Supplemental tutoring for Disadvantaged Students performing in the bottom 20 percent.
- 1.3. *Development of School Subprojects through the provision of School In-Kind Grants (SIG) to support in-service teacher professional development opportunities, including the set-up of a professional learning network among Moldovan teachers, as well as teachers from other countries; and school projects promoting innovative pedagogical practices. Implementation of this Component 1.3 will be performed through the SIG Program as described in Section 1.4 of this Manual*

b) **Part 2. Improve the Quality of Learning Environment in Participating Institutions.** Improving the learning environment of Participating Institutions through, *inter alia*:

- 2.1. *Equipping Participating Institutions:*
 - (a) Equipping the Participating Institutions with furniture, information technology (IT) and Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) equipment, and teaching and learning materials for students with disabilities;
 - (b) Providing training to teachers and managers of the Participating Institutions, including through user guides and demonstration videos on operating and maintaining IT and STEM equipment, and the use of such equipment with modern teaching methodologies and digital learning materials in the classrooms; and
 - (c) Equipping the new constructed high schools under Part 2.3 (a) with furniture and equipment for classrooms, canteens, and sport facilities, and any other provisions required to ensure full functionality of such high schools.
- 2.2. *Carrying out civil works for the rehabilitation of:*
 - (a) Participating Institutions; and

- (b) Selected ECEC Facilities.

2.3. *Building Modern High Schools*

- (a) Construction of three (3) high schools in Priority Areas of the Borrower's territory; and
- (b) Preparing and carrying out training modules and adopting manuals on schools' maintenance, including operation and maintenance of clean technologies, in the new constructed high schools.

c) **Part 3. Strengthening the Capacity for Education Sector Management and Refugee Response.**

3.1. *Improving planning, management, and evaluation of education reforms through, inter alia:*

- (a) Upgrading and expanding the existing Education Management Information System for making better use of data to support management decisions at all levels;
- (b) Strengthening the national capacity for administration, data analysis, and dissemination, of the national and international student assessments;
- (c) Upgrading the teacher and managers professional standards;
- (d) Revising the nationwide education infrastructure investments planning, including climate change adaptation of the education sector;
- (e) Supporting national and subnational capacity building to lead upper secondary sector reforms and ECEC expansion; and
- (f) Conducting an impact evaluation of the Learning Recovery Program and the ECEC expansion.

3.2. *Project Management*

- (a) Supporting the Project Management Team (PMT) with management, monitoring, and evaluation activities, including, inter alia: (i) project supervision and implementation; (ii) compliance with Project requirements, such as financial management, procurement, E&S, and other required technical areas; and (iii) implementing outreach activities related to the Project; and
- (b) Supporting National Office of Regional and Local Development (NORLD) Team with management, monitoring, and evaluation activities, including, inter alia: (i) project supervision and implementation; (ii) compliance with Project requirements, such as financial management, procurement, E&S, and other required technical areas; and (iii) implementing outreach activities related to the Project.

d) **Part 4. Contingent Emergency Response. Provision of immediate response to an Eligible Crisis or Emergency, as needed.**

1.3. Project Financing

5. The costs and financing per Project component (including the SIG Program under Component 1.3) are presented in Table 1 below. The GoM financing will be provided as parallel financing to the Project.

Table 1. Total Project Cost and Financing by Component (USD equivalent, millions)

Project Components	IBRD	GPE	ELP	GCFF	Total	GoM
Component 1: Improving Quality of Teaching	8.6	4.8	2.7	10.0	59.8	10.0
<i>Including Component 1.3</i>	—	4.8	—			
Component 2: Improving the Quality of Learning Environment in Participating Institutions	24.7	—	2.3			
Component 3: Strengthening the Capacity for Education Sector Management and Refugee Response	6.7	—	—			
Total	40.0	4.8	5.0			

6. The IBRD would finance activities under Parts 1.1(a), 2.1, 2.2.(a), 2.3, 3.1 and 3.2(b), and 3.2(a) of the Project at a rate of ¾ to ¼ with GCFF funds, while Part 1.3 would be financed by GPE, and Parts 1.1(b) and 2.2.(b) would be financed by ELP.

1.4. School In-Kind Grants Program

7. The main goal of the SIG Program is to support:

- a. In-service teacher professional development opportunities, and
- b. Activities promoting innovative pedagogical practices in several Priority Areas as described in Section 3.3.

8. The SIG Program will be implemented based on open competition of Subproject Proposals. A total of 120 Schools will benefit over 2025-2027 period of goods, services and training, which will be centrally procured by MoER via PMT and individually delivered to Schools according to each SIG Agreement and School Subproject.

9. The following specific additional indicators are envisaged to be achieved under Component 1.3 by the SIG Program Closing Date according to EQIP Results Framework and Monitoring Indicators (Annex 3):

- a. Number of textbooks purchased and distributed (baseline: 0; target: 600);
- b. Number of teachers trained (baseline: 0; target: 120);
- c. Number of children who will directly benefit from the grants (baseline: 0; target: 8,000):
 - Of which, girls in STEM (baseline: 0; target: 4,000);
 - Of which, children with disability and/or SEN (baseline: 0; target: 100);
 - Of which, refugee children (baseline: 0; target: 70);
- d. Gender gap in STEM education reduced (baseline: 7%; target: 5%).

1.5. School In-Kind Grants Operations Manual

10. The objective of this Manual is to provide comprehensive information about implementation arrangements of the SIG Program under the EQIP Component 1.3.

11. This Manual was developed based on and in compliance with Bank regulations, provisions of Loan Agreement, GPE Grant Agreement, POM, PAD and legislation of the Republic of Moldova.

12. The Manual provides the following SIG Program related aspects (but not limited to them):

- a. Detailed description of activities to be carried out under the SIG Program;
- b. Detailed description of the institutional arrangements (including stakeholders' roles and responsibilities) for the implementation of the SIG Program;
- c. Administrative, accounting, auditing, reporting, financial, procurement and disbursement procedures for the SIG Program;
- d. Eligibility, evaluation and selection criteria, requirements, procedures and documents for the approval of School Subprojects, including evaluation grids;
- e. School In-Kind Grants evaluation grid;
- f. The model form of the School In-Kind Grant Agreement.

13. This Manual shall be used in combination with the EQIP Project Appraisal Document, Loan Agreement, GPE Grant Agreement and Project Operations Manual (POM) in order to understand conceptual and legal foundations, as well as avoid/clear misunderstandings and unnecessary duplication.

14. Any reference to a specific chapter, section, paragraph, footnote or any other portion of text/table/figure of this Manual may be made with or without using the words "of this Manual". This shall be meant as applicable to this Manual only.

15. This Manual is subject to periodic revisions and improvements, as needed or required, and subject to the MoER approval with Bank's prior No Objection.

16. The Romanian and English versions of the Manual shall be made available on MoER's official web site (www.mec.gov.md).

17. In case of discrepancy between the Manual on one side, and of LA, GPE Grant Agreement, ELP Grant Agreement and POM on the other side, provisions of any of the last four documents shall prevail.

18. In case of discrepancy between the Manual on one side, and the SIG Agreement, ToR for SIG Officer, any ToR for additional officers/specialists/consultants under the SIG Program, provisions of this Manual shall prevail.

1.6. List of acronyms, abbreviations and definitions used in this Manual

19. Capitalized terms used in this Manual have the meanings ascribed to them by the Loan Agreement, GPE Grant Agreement and Project Operating Manual unless this Manual provides otherwise.

20. For the purposes of this Manual, acronyms, abbreviations and definitions below have the following meanings:

- (1) **“Anti-Corruption Guidelines”**, as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement means, for purposes of paragraph 2 of the Appendix to the Standard Conditions, the “Guidelines on Preventing and Combating Fraud and Corruption in Projects Financed by IBRD Loans and IDA Credits and Grants”, dated October 15, 2006, and revised in January, 2011, and as of July 1, 2016;
- (2) **“APR”** means Annual Progress Report;
- (3) **“CoA”** means Court of Accounts of the Republic of Moldova;
- (4) **“Disadvantaged Students”** mean the students who meet the definition set forth in the POM, and thus include the following categories:
 - (i) Students from poor families;
 - (ii) Students from rural areas;
 - (iii) Girls¹;
 - (iv) Roma students;
 - (v) Refugee students from Ukraine;
 - (vi) Students at-risk falling behind academically; and
 - (vii) Students with disabilities and/or SEN;
- (5) **“ECE”** means Early Childhood Education;
- (6) **“ECEC”** means Early Childhood Education and Care;
- (7) **“ELP”** means Early Learning Partnership Multi-Donor Trust Fund;
- (8) **“ELP Grant Agreement”** and **“ELP GA”** mean the ELP Grant Agreement number TFOC1507 dated June 30, 2023 as described by Section 1.1 of this Manual;
- (9) **“E&S”** means Environmental and Social;
- (10) **“EQIP”** and **“Project”** mean the Education Quality Improvement Project as described in Schedule 1 to GPE Grant Agreement;
- (11) **“ESMF”** means Environmental and Social Management Framework;
- (12) **“ESMP”** means Environmental and Social Management Plan;
- (13) **“FM”** means Financial Management;
- (14) **“GA”** means Grant Agreement;
- (15) **“GBV”** means Gender-Based Violence;
- (16) **“GCFF”** means Global Concessional Financing Facility;
- (17) **“General Education Institution”** and **“GEI”** mean a general education institution in the Republic of Moldova whether registered as legal entity or not (is part of LPA education infrastructure), which can be a primary

¹ Girls in STEM fields.

school (classes 1-4) or a gymnasium (secondary school, cycle 1, classes 5-9) or a lyceum (secondary school, cycle 2, classes 10-12, also called “*high school*” as per EQIP financing agreements), or an institution combining different or all levels of general education, i.e. primary school + gymnasium (called “*gymnasium*”) or primary school + gymnasium + lyceum (called “*lyceum*”) or any other similar combination thereof. GEI might comprise a preschool (kindergarten), but it’s not a must. This definition does not include individual preschools (kindergartens);

- (18) “**GoM**” means Government of Moldova;
- (19) “**GRM**” means Grievance Redress Mechanism;
- (20) “**GPE**” means Global Partnership for Education, as defined in GPE Grant Agreement;
- (21) “**GPE Grant**” means the Grant of USD 4.8 million from GPE extended by the Bank to the Republic of Moldova as provided by Art. III of the GPE Grant Agreement and Section 1.1 of this Manual;
- (22) “**GPE Grant Agreement**” and “**GPE GA**” mean the GPE Grant Agreement number TF0C1484 dated June 30, 2023 as described by Section 1.1 of this Manual;
- (23) “**GPE Grant Closing Date**” means the last day of GPE Grant withdrawal period which is December 31, 2027 as set up in Section III.B.2 of Schedule 2 to the GPE Grant Agreement
- (24) “**IBRD**” means International Bank for Reconstruction and Development;
- (25) “**IPF**” Investment Project Financing;
- (26) “**IT**” means Information Technology;
- (27) “**LEG**” means Local Education Group;
- (28) “**Loan Agreement**” and “**LA**” means Loan Agreement (Loan number 9536-MD; GCFF TF number TF0C1762) as provided by Section 1.1 of this Manual;
- (29) “**LPA**” means Local Public Authority;
- (30) “**M&E**” means Monitoring and Evaluation;
- (31) “**MDL**” means Republic of Moldova Leu;
- (32) “**Ministry of Education and Research**” and “**MoER**”, as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, mean the Republic of Moldova’s ministry of the same name, or any legal successor or successors thereto acceptable to the Bank;
- (33) “**Ministry of Finance**” and “**MoF**”, as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, mean the Republic of Moldova’s ministry of the same name, or any legal successor or successors thereto acceptable to the Bank;
- (34) “**MPR**” means Monthly Progress Report;
- (35) “**NBM**” means National Bank of Moldova;
- (36) “**NACE**” means National Agency for Curriculum and Evaluation of the Republic of Moldova;

- (37) **“NDS”** means National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030” of the Republic of Moldova;
- (38) **“NORLD”** means National Office of Regional and Local Development as defined by Appendix to the GPE Grant Agreement;
- (39) **“PMT”**, as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, means the Project Management Team within MoER charged with the overall Project coordination and management and referred to in Section I.A of Schedule 2 to this Agreement, or any legal successor or successors thereto acceptable to the Bank;
- (40) **“Project Appraisal Document”** and **“PAD”** mean Project Appraisal Document of EQIP as approved by the Bank on May 9, 2023, Report No: PCBASIC0268069;
- (41) **“Project Operations Manual”** and **“POM”** mean Project Operations Manual of the EQIP as defined by Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement;
- (42) **“PR”** means Public Relations;
- (43) **“Priority Areas”** have the meaning described in par.28 of PAD and Section 3.3 of this Manual;
- (44) **“Project Closing Date”** means December 31, 2029 as set up in Section III.B.2 of Schedule 2 to Loan Agreement;
- (45) **“Project Coordinator”** or **“PC”** means the EQIP Project Coordinator as described in Section 1.6 of POM;
- (46) **“Project Executive Director”** or **“PED”** means the EQIP Project Executive Director as described in Section 1.6 of POM;
- (47) **“Project General Director”** or **“PGD”** means the EQIP Project General Director as described in Section 1.6 of POM;
- (48) **“PP”** means Procurement Plan;
- (49) **“QPR”** means Quarterly Progress Report;
- (50) **“School”**, as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, means an Applicant, whose School Subproject has been found eligible to receive a School In-Kind Grant in accordance with the criteria set forth in the School In-Kind Grants Operations Manual, and has received or is to receive a School In-Kind Grant under a School In-Kind Grant Agreement to be executed under Part 1.3 of the Project; **“Schools”** means each of such School;
- (51) **“School In-Kind Grant”** (and **“SIG”**), as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, means goods, non-consulting services, consulting services, and Training financed out of the proceeds of GPE Grant, to be provided to the Schools under Part 1.3 of the Project for the purposes of carrying out a School Subproject subject to the specific terms, conditions and procedures set forth in the School In-Kind Grants Operations Manual and the School In-Kind Grant Agreement;
- (52) **“School In-Kind Grant Agreement”** (and **“SIG Agreement”** or **“SIGA”**), as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, mean any of the

agreements referred to in Section I.D of Schedule 2 to GPE Grant Agreement;

- (53) **“School In-Kind Grant Application”** (and **“SIG Application”**) mean an official request for a School In-Kind Grant from an interested GEI (**“Applicant”** and **“SIG Applicant”**) developed and submitted to MoER (including attached documents) as provided by this Manual.
- (54) **“School In-Kind Grant Operations Manual”** (and **“SIGOM”** or **“Manual”**), as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, mean the manual to be prepared, approved, and adopted by the Republic of Moldova, through MoER, to facilitate the carrying out of Part 1.3 of the Project, as the same may be amended from time to time with the prior written approval of the Bank;
- (55) **“School In-Kind Grant Program”** (and **“SIG Program”** or **“SIGP”**) mean the program to be implemented under the Component 1.3 of EQIP as described in Section 1.2 and 1.4 of this Manual;
- (56) **“School In-Kind Grant Program Closing Date”** (and **“SIG Program Closing Date”**) mean December 31, 2027 as set up in Section III.B.2 of Schedule 2 to GPE Grant Agreement;
- (57) **“School In-Kind Grant Program Closing Plan”** (and **“SIG Program Closing Plan”**) mean the SIG Program closing plan as described in Section 4.2;
- (58) **“School Subprojects”**, as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, mean eligible subprojects for Schools approved by the Republic of Moldova through MoER and the Bank in accordance with the provisions of this Manual;
- (59) **“School Subprojects Selection Committee”** (and **“Selection Committee”**), as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, mean the committee of the same name to be established under MoER for the selection of School Subprojects, referred to in Section I.A.3 of Schedule 2 to GPE Grant Agreement;
- (60) **“SEN”** means (children with) Special Educational Needs;
- (61) **“SSM”** means School Subproject Manager, as defined in Section 2.3;
- (62) **“SST”** means School Subproject Team, as defined in Section 2.3;
- (63) **“STEM”** means Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Considering MOER’s Order No.439/2024 On Approving the Educational Framework for Primary Schools, Gymnasiums and Lyceums for 2024-2025, the following disciplines are identified as STEM: mathematics, physics, astronomy, informatics, information & communication technologies, chemistry, biology, zoology, geography. Should a new STEM-related discipline be introduced by MoER, it falls under applicability of this Manual with no need to correspondingly amend the Manual.
- (64) **“Subproject Proposal”** and **“Proposal”** mean a project proposal of the Applicant aimed at addressing its specific eligible needs by applying to and benefitting from support under the SIG Program, which has been developed and submitted to MoER as part of SIG Application in compliance

this Manual. Should a Subproject Proposal be approved by the WB and MoER in compliance with this Manual, it acquires the term and becomes a “School Subproject” (see the definition above in this Section 1.6);

- (65) **“ToR”** means Terms of Reference;
- (66) **“Training”**, as defined in Appendix to GPE Grant Agreement, means expenses incurred for Project-related studies, training courses, seminars, workshops, and other training activities, not included under goods or service providers’ contracts, including costs of training materials, space and equipment rental, travel, accommodation and per diem costs of trainees and trainers and trainers’ fees, and other Training related miscellaneous costs, all based on an annual budget agreed with the Bank.

2. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

2.1. Ministry of Education and Research

21. The MoER shall exercise its rights and carry out its obligations under the GPE Grant Agreement, this Manual, each SIG Agreement and each procurement contract in such a manner as to protect the interests of the Republic of Moldova and the Bank and to accomplish the purposes of the GPE Grant Agreement, and reach the indicators described in Section 1.4.

22. The MoER is the implementing agency of EQIP's Component 1.3, and subsequently the SIG Program.

23. The General Education Department within the MoER works closely with the PMT to implement the SIG Program.

2.2. Project Management Team

24. The PMT will be responsible for the overall implementation, administration and coordination of the SIG Program. In this process the PMT will be supported by the General Education Department within the MoER.

25. The PMT core staff responsible for implementation of the SIG Program are the following eight core persons:

- 1) Project Coordinator;
- 2) School In-Kind Grant Officer;
- 3) Financial Management Specialist;
- 4) Procurement Specialist;
- 5) Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist;
- 6) Environmental Specialist;
- 7) Social Specialist; and
- 8) Communication Specialist.

26. Generic responsibilities of PMT core staff (except PC) are described by the Sections 2.2.1 - 2.2.7 below. More details are provided by POM.

2.2.1. SIG Officer

27. The main roles and responsibilities of the SIG Officer are to support the MoER in managing implementation of SIGP activities under Component 1.3. He/she is responsible for supervising all SIGP activities from financial management, procurement, social and environmental, monitoring & evaluation, and public communication perspectives in collaboration with the relevant PMT specialists.

28. SIG Officer participates in review and evaluation of SIG Applications (including Project Proposals), and are responsible for monitoring of School Subprojects implementation and reviewing of progress/final reports prepared by Schools. They are also responsible for day-to-day communication with representatives of MoER – mainly the General Education

Department – who are in charge of implementing SIGP activities financed by the Project, and cooperating and communicating with Schools.

29. The template ToR for the SIG Officer detailing core responsibilities in the SIG Program initiation and execution phases is provided by Annex 9 of this Manual.

30. SIG Officer shall be assisted by the second SIG Officer in SIG Program implementation by providing assistance and support to Applicants² and Schools, and performing other SIG Program related activities and tasks, as directed by SIG Officer. SIG Officer 2 shall be selected and contracted by MoER upon approval of this Manual. The SIG Officer 2 shall work under overall supervision and coordination by Program Coordinator (PC) and in close collaboration with and under direction of the SIG Officer.

31. SIG Officer 2 shall submit monthly progress reports and invoices to PED with prior coordination/countersigning by PC. For this purpose, the Annex 9 template shall be adjusted with provisions of this Section 2.2.1 when necessary to be used. He/she is not a PMT core staff.

2.2.2. Financial Management Specialist

32. The FM Specialist is responsible for monitoring the SIG Program financial management system in accordance with the accounting standards applied by the Bank and the Republic of Moldova, so that they reflect the activities, resources and costs related to the activities; monitoring the procurement and use of goods/services supported with SIG funds and proposing activities in order to ensure compliance with Moldovan and Bank procedures for financial management.

33. The FM Specialist is responsible for initiating and monitoring payments for procured goods and services out of SIG funds based on procurement contracts. In addition, the FM Specialist will provide support for approval and timely transfer/provision of goods/services from MoER to Schools.

34. FM Specialist may be assisted by an additional FM Consultant to perform FM activities related to the SIG Program. The need for additional assistance for FM Specialist shall be reviewed, and a decision to select and contract him/her shall be made by PMT with prior coordination with the Bank.

2.2.3. Procurement Specialist

35. The Procurement Specialist shall perform procurements within the SIG Program in compliance with the Bank's rules & procedures, POM and specific details provided by this Manual, if any. The Procurement Specialist will provide support and guidance (training) to SIG Officers and other PMT members if required/needed on procurement procedures related to SIG Program, included those described in Chapter 6 of this Manual.

36. Procurement Specialist may be assisted by an additional Procurement Consultant to perform procurements under the SIG Program. The need for additional assistance for Procurement Specialist shall be reviewed, and a decision to select and contract him/her shall be made by PMT with prior coordination with the Bank.

² Both SIG Officers will be engaged with Applicants and Schools throughout each and all steps of SIG Program application and implementation processes. Details on training and consulting GEIs at application stage are provided in Section 4.1.

2.2.4. M&E Specialist

37. The M&E specialist oversees internal monitoring and evaluation and, in accordance with the defined indicators, monitors compliance with the principles and procedures for monitoring and evaluation of the progress of activities supported by the SIG Program and the attainment of goals thereof.

2.2.5. Environmental Specialist

38. The Environmental Specialist has overall responsibility for implementation and monitoring of environmental aspects of SIGs throughout the process from SIG Application to finalization of School Subprojects and SIG Agreement in accordance with the Environmental & Social Management Framework (ESMF) described in Chapter 8 of this Manual.

2.2.6. Social Specialist

39. The Social Specialist has overall responsibility for implementation and monitoring of social aspects of the SIGs in accordance with the ESMF described in the Chapter 8 of this Manual. The Social Specialist is also responsible for the implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and Labor Management Plan (LMP), which were prepared for the Project and disclosed on MoER's website - <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/proiectul-imbunatatirea-calitatii-educatiei>. Also, he/she is responsible for the tracking and reporting of the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) described in POM.

2.2.7. Communication Specialist

40. The Communication Specialist oversees promotion of activities and results under the SIG Program. He/she is responsible for the development and implementation of the EQIP Promotional Campaign of which the SIGs are an integral part.

2.3. School

41. GEI can benefit of SIG Program during its period of implementation (see Section 1.4 and Chapter 3 and 4).

42. Schools are the final beneficiaries of this SIG Program, and they are responsible for consulting with the school community (teachers, pupils, parents, LPAs, business community, experts and other interested parties), identifying school needs and determining activities to be supported by SIG Grants, for submitting the SIG application, including Subproject Proposal, implementing the School Subproject activities related to the SIG Program, timely sending the necessary periodic reports to the PMT, as well as adequately respecting and executing all procedures outlined in this Manual and provisions of SIG Agreements.

43. In order to efficiently and effectively perform its responsibilities related to SIG Agreement and School Subproject implementation, the School shall nominate a School Subproject Team (SST) and a School Subproject Manager (SSM) in accordance with internal ordinance with a clear reference of the time spent for implementation of School Subproject activities.

44. The SSM is responsible for the implementation of the SIG Agreement and School Subproject, and provisions of this Manual as well.

45. Key responsibilities and qualification requirements for the SSM are detailed in Annex 10 to this Manual.

3. SIG PROGRAM TERMS AND CONDITIONS

3.1. Terms and conditions of School In-Kind Grants

46. SIG amount approved for each School shall not exceed thirty-six thousand United States Dollars (USD 36,000) or equivalent at NBM exchange rate at the date of payment for each eligible good, service and/or training under the SIG.

47. The SIG funds shall be used by MoER to centrally procure goods, services and training as requested per School Subprojects, and deliver them to Schools in compliance with this Manual and SIG Agreements.

48. A School can benefit of only one SIG under the SIG Program.

49. A SIG can be approved only to one School under the SIG Program.

50. The costs categories breakdown is presented in the Table 2 below:

Table 2. SIG limits per goods, services and trainings

General Education Institution	SIG funds limit (ceiling)	USD 36,000	
	Maximum Allowed for Goods	80%	USD 28,800
	Minimum Allowed for Services, Trainings	20%	USD 7,200

51. The budget of School Subprojects cannot be increased.

52. All savings incurred under Subcomponents 1.3.2 and 1.3.3 of Component 1.3 of EQIP shall be allocated to Subcomponent 1.3.1, and all savings under Subcomponent 1.3.1 remain under the same subcomponent. Savings will be used to finance additional SIGs to Schools (already selected) up to the limit set up in this Section 3.1 to expand activities under their School Subprojects without requiring any budget changes. Decisions on allocation of savings shall be made by MoER with prior acceptance/clearance from the Bank (and GPE, as/if needed/required) and implemented before September 30, 2027. Envisaged SIG Agreements shall be correspondingly amended. While implementing SIG Program activities (especially execution of procurement contracts as provided by Table 3 in Section 4.2), PMT shall keep monitoring SIG Program budget expenditures and financial commitments & disbursements, identify (potential) savings, and propose (potential) solutions to use identified & confirmed savings to the benefit of Schools' teachers and students (especially those disadvantaged). Notwithstanding any savings, no new Schools shall be accepted into the SIG Program.

3.2. Eligible General Education Institutions

3.2.1. Initial eligibility criteria

53. An Applicant shall comply with each and all of the following initial eligibility criteria for GEIs:

- Applicant is a public GEI located in the Republic of Moldova. Definition of GEI is provided by Section 1.6 of this Manual;
- Applicant is neither engaged in a liquidation or reorganization process (merger or acquisition) as legal entity, nor is planned for liquidation or

reorganization (merger or acquisition) in the following 10 years. Applicant pursuing a legal registration procedure as a legal entity (public institution) is eligible;

- c. Applicant has minimum one teacher contracted full-time and certified in each discipline envisaged in the SIG Application;
- d. The proposal is in line with the SIG Program objectives i.e. aims to support (a) in-service teacher professional development opportunities and (b) projects promoting innovative pedagogical practices in several priority areas as per priority areas defined in Section 3.3.

54. GEIs with large number of disadvantaged students, which benefit under other EQIP Components/Subcomponents are encouraged to apply to the SIG Program. These efforts shall be supported, aiming at ensuring convergence and synergy among the Project Components.

55. An Applicant shall maintain compliance with each and all criteria under this Section 3.2.1 throughout the SIG Application process until the day the SIG Agreement is effective, except if its SIG Application was rejected.

3.2.2. Continued eligibility criteria. Remedial actions for non-compliance

56. A School must permanently be and remain in compliance at any time with each and all of the following continued eligibility criteria under this Section 3.2.2 starting the day its SIG Agreement is effective:

- a. Be in compliance with each and all initial eligibility criteria under the Section 3.2.1;
- b. Implement efficiently and effectively the School Subproject;
- c. Execute adequately its obligations, roles and responsibilities as provided by SIG Agreement and this Manual, including but not limited to submission of accurate and timely progress reports;
- d. Cooperate efficiently with representatives of the WB, GPE, MoER, PMT, EQIP auditors (including CoA), external M&E experts, and other Project stakeholders;
- e. Cooperate efficiently, facilitate, provide support and assistance if/when necessary/required in relation with SIG Program matters, including but not limited to onsite monitoring visits of representatives of the WB, GPE, MoER, PMT, EQIP auditors (including CoA), external M&E experts, and other Project stakeholders; access to premises, documents and information related to the SIG Program; meetings with School teachers, students, SST/SSM, School management, parents, LPA and other School Subproject stakeholders; remedial procedures initiated and implemented by PMT in relation with continued eligibility criteria.

57. PMT (SG Officer) is responsible for monitoring Schools compliance with continued eligibility criteria set under this Section 3.2.2.

58. Should one or more (apparent) non-compliances with continued eligibility criteria be identified, PMT shall take necessary actions to assist the School to liquidate non-

compliances and continue/finalize implementation of SIG Agreement and School Subproject. Hence, PMT shall open an remedial procedure comprising the following actions:

- a. Review the situation;
- b. Identify potential solutions in consultation with the School and MoER (the Bank, other stakeholders if needed/required);
- c. Recommend remedial actions to be implemented by the School;
- d. Monitor implementation of remedial actions, and
- e. Report back to MoER (copy the Bank if needed/required).

59. As part of recommended remedial actions under this Section 3.2.2, PMT is authorized to issue permanent or temporary exceptions from compliance with one or more continued eligibility criteria this Section 3.2.2.

60. If the School fails to implement remedial actions as recommended, PMT shall terminate SIG Agreement, including withdrawal of already delivered goods, cancellation of goods, services and training yet to be delivered, if any.

61. Any activity related to non-compliances under this Section 3.2.2 shall be properly documented, signed and archived in written and electronic format.

3.3. Priority Areas

62. The SIG Program will support **(i) in-service teacher professional development opportunities** and **(ii) projects promoting innovative pedagogical practices in several priority areas**. These Priority Areas under the SIG Program are set up by par. 28 of PAD, and include the following:

- a. Application of digital tools, and active and engaging learning experiences for students. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1) Integrate digital tools in the teaching process, such as interactive platforms, educational applications, multimedia resources, artificial intelligence (AI);
 - 2) Create engaging learning experiences that stimulate student involvement and performance;
 - 3) Develop digital skills for both teachers and students;
 - 4) Implement alternative curricular plans and make the educational offer more flexible;
- b. Effective student learning assessment and feedback practices used by teachers. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1) Implementation of innovative assessment methods, such as formative assessments and self-assessments;
 - 2) Development of constructive feedback tools that support students in their continuous learning process;

- c. Active learning, collaborative learning, building a sense of community, belonging, and well-being of students. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1) Enhancing students' sense of well-being, reducing and preventing bullying;
 - 2) Increasing student participation in the decision-making process;
- d. Innovative remedial programs for students falling behind academically and disadvantaged students including Roma children, refugee students from Ukraine, and children with disabilities. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1) Academic remediation programs aimed at reducing educational gaps;
 - 2) Activities dedicated to disadvantaged children, including refugees from Ukraine, Roma children, and children with disabilities;
 - 3) Creating an inclusive school environment that promotes the development of every student.
- e. Girls' participation in STEM fields. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1) Awareness campaigns that encourage girls to participate in educational programs in STEM;
 - 2) Practical activities and mentorship to support girls' interest in STEM careers;
- f. Exchange experiences and mobility programs, creating and developing a community of practice in teaching innovations. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1) Experience exchanges between teachers from Moldova and those from other countries;
 - 2) International collaboration projects that promote best educational practices and innovation;
 - 3) The creation of communities of practice for the continuous development of pedagogical skills;
 - 4) Strengthening school autonomy and involving the entire community in the decision-making process.
- g. Professional learning network between Moldovan teachers, and potential collaboration with teachers from Romania, Estonia and other countries facing similar challenges. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1) Create partnerships between teachers from Moldova and their colleagues in Romania, Estonia, and other countries, contributing to the exchange of pedagogical experiences;
 - 2) Organize study visits, conferences, and international workshops to learn modern teaching methods and solutions for common educational challenges;

- 3) Develop mentoring programs between teachers from Moldova and those from other countries to support continuous professional development and pedagogical innovation;
- 4) Implement joint educational projects that promote collaboration between students and teachers, using digital platforms and interactive teaching methods;
- 5) Create online platforms or professional networks to disseminate educational resources, teaching strategies, and best practices internationally.

3.4. Eligible and ineligible activities

3.4.1. Eligible activities

63. Each and all activities of Subproject Proposal shall be aligned with EQIP/SIGP development objectives. In order to be approved for support under the SIG Program, activities to be performed under the Subproject Proposal shall be in line with the SIG Program goals described in Section 1.4, i.e. support in-service teacher professional development opportunities and School activities promoting innovative pedagogical practices, with Priority Areas described in Section 3.3.

64. For the purposes of this Section 3.4, the word “activities” comprises goods, consulting services, non-consulting services and trainings. Provisions on eligible and ineligible activities under the SIG Program from cost perspective are provided in Section 3.5.

65. The following activities are eligible under the SIG Program:

- a. Purchase of goods as described by Section 3.5.1;
- b. Subscriptions payment for platforms to access learning materials;
- c. Activities to improve e-learning methods;
- d. Activities to increase access to quality teaching and learning methods;
- e. Activities to increase effective student learning assessment and feedback practices;
- f. Activities to increase active learning, collaborative learning, building a sense of community, belonging, and well-being of students;
- g. Innovative remedial programs for students falling behind academically and disadvantaged students including Roma children, refugee students from Ukraine, and children with disabilities;
- h. Activities promoting innovative pedagogical practices;
- i. Stimulation and facilitation of girls’ participation in STEM fields, including but not limited through:
 - Awareness raising campaigns to increase the participation of women in STEM academic programs;
 - Assistance for establishing and implementing effective career guidance

services, including approaches to ensure that these services are inclusive and gender unbiased; and

- j. Exchange experiences and mobility programs, creating and developing a community of practice in teaching innovations;
- k. Activities towards development and operationalization of professional learning network(s) among Moldovan teachers and teachers from other countries.
- l. One-off conferences if they form part of a wider range of activities to be implemented in the life-time of the action. For these purposes, preparatory activities for a conference and the publication of the proceedings of the conference do not, in themselves, constitute such “wider activities”.

66. Activities shall be compliant with GPE Grant Agreement, PAD, POM and this Manual.

67. Implementation period of activities under the Subproject Proposal shall not exceed time limits provided in Section 4.2.

3.4.2. Ineligible activities

68. The following activities are ineligible under the SIG Program:

- a. Activities already financed (totally or partially) or planned to be financed from other sources;
- b. Activities concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses, studies or training courses or other events similar in kind/goal.

3.5. Eligible and ineligible costs

69. For the purposes of this Section 3.5, the word “costs” shall comprise “costs” and “expenses” (expenditures) as well, notwithstanding their specific accounting definitions/meanings and any differences thereof.

3.5.1. Eligible costs

70. Each and all costs of Subproject Proposal under the SIG Program shall be aligned with EQIP/SIGP development objectives.

71. Eligible Goods (G) are the following:

- a. Materials for Subproject Proposal implementation including, if in line with the SIGP objectives, the following:
 - (i) Education resources: books, workbooks, specialty literature, magazines etc.;
 - (ii) Information materials (including promotional) for Subproject Proposal implementation;
 - (iii) Inventory, small furniture;
 - (iv) Substances, raw materials and other consumables, except those

prohibited, subject to verification of storage conditions according to legislation (if dangerous);

- b. Equipment and machinery for learning centers, classrooms, labs, counselling centers, library/research and information centers of schools for Subproject Proposal implementation;
- c. Equipment and related/necessary accessories and/or inventory for sports/games and sport/game-specific activities (including trainings and competitions) for Subproject Proposal implementation;
- d. Hardware and related/necessary accessories and/or inventory and software and related/necessary activation/enabling/renewal licenses, fees, permits for Subproject Proposal implementation;
- e. Other type of goods that are directly related to implementation of planned activities under Subproject Proposal.

72. All goods under this Section 3.5.1 to be procured from SIG funds shall be new and unused.

73. Eligible Non-Consulting Services (NCS) are the following:

- a. Initial and periodic fees for using online resources; associated training and initial maintenance;
- b. Travel expenses for participation in Trainings, peer exchange, competitions, etc.;
- c. Rental of conference room/equipment/hotel accommodation/food and refreshments for trainings;
- d. Events, meetings, peer exchange, etc.;
- e. Translation;
- f. Subscription to online tools;
- g. Graphic design services;
- h. Other services directly related to implementation of planned activities under Subproject Proposal.

74. Eligible Consulting Services (CS) for carrying out eligible activities, provided by service providers (entities/group of entities) or individual consultants: fees for consulting services for the engagement of external collaborators: trainers/consultants/mentors/tutors. External collaborators cannot be civil servants or public administration employees.

75. Eligible Trainings (T) - expenditures (others than CS and NCS) incurred for training, professional development and other associated activities, including seminars, workshops and study-visits, travel and subsistence allowances for training participants, trainers' fees, rental of training facilities (premises, equipment, renting means of transport), preparation and reproduction of training materials and other activities incidental to the preparation and implementation of the training. These might specifically include the following:

- a. Expenditures for professional development and other associated activities;
- b. Seminars;
- c. Workshops and study-visits;

- d. Trainers' fees;
- e. Rental of training facilities (premises, equipment, renting means of transport);
- f. Preparation and reproduction of training materials;
- g. Other activities incidental to the preparation and implementation of the training.

3.5.2. Ineligible costs

76. Ineligible costs under the SIG Program are the following:

- a. The ones occurred after the implementation period of the SIG Program or after the SIG Agreement was closed/terminated;
- b. The one financed from other sources;
- c. Are not necessary for the implementation of the School Subproject;
- d. Are not reasonable, justified and comply with the SIGP objectives, requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency;
- e. Are not complying with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- f. Are not identifiable and/or verifiable;
- g. Are not supported by invoices, proof of payment and/or documents of equivalent probative value;
- h. Second hand goods;
- i. Purchase of vehicles;
- j. Purchase and/or lease of land and/or buildings;
- k. Civil works;
- l. Debts and debt service charges (interest, fees/commissions and penalties);
- m. Provisions for losses or liabilities;
- n. Exchange rate losses;
- o. Loans to third parties;
- p. Fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation.
- q. Excursions and other one-time activities with pupils;
- r. Fees for GEI staff (allowances, per diems, bonuses, or other compensations)
- s. Surveillance equipment (security cameras);
- t. Advertising campaigns (transfers for advertising agencies, media, etc.), except promotion activities/events related of Subproject Proposal;
- u. Indirect costs of the GEI;
- v. Other costs that are not directly related to activities and do not contribute to achieving the School Subproject objectives.

4. SIG APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

4.1. Process overview

77. Application process for SIGs under the SIG Program comprises the following steps:
- a. **Step 1:** preparation and submission of SIG Applications by Applicants;
 - b. **Step 2:** compliance evaluation of SIG Applications by MoER (PMT). Successful Applicants will be notified on passing to Step 3. Unsuccessful Applicants will be accordingly notified for rejection of SIG Application with reasons explained;
 - c. **Step 3:** preparation and submission of Subproject Proposals by Applicants. As part of this step and in order to facilitate these efforts, PMT will invite personnel from the MoER (and subordinated entities) and EQIP, and will contract up to 10 local experts to deliver information & training sessions and provide individual consultation & advice to Applicants in areas related to subproject development & management, including but not limited to subproject identification and writing, fundraising, management cycle, public and stakeholder consultation and communication, budgeting & financing, M&E and reporting, E&S (including GRM), other SIG Program implementation aspects as/if necessary/required;
 - d. **Step 4:** quality evaluation and selection of Subproject Proposals by School Subprojects Selection Committee. Successful Applicants will be notified on qualifying for Step 5. Unsuccessful Applicants will be accordingly notified for rejection of SIG Application with reasons explained³;
 - e. **Step 5:** final approval of SIG Applications (including Subproject Proposals) by MoER with prior Bank No Objection (clearance). Successful Applicants will be notified on approval of SIG Application and invited to cooperate on drafting the SIG Agreements between the MoER and winning Schools (or LPAs);
 - f. **Step 6:** signing of SIG Agreements.
78. Evaluation of SIG Applications consists of the following:
- a. Compliance evaluation of SIG Application (and related documents except Subproject Proposals). This would imply revision by SIG Officers of SIG Applications and resubmission to the SIG Officers of missing information and/or documents. Though the process implies collection of additional information or missing documents, at this stage no changes are to be made in the SIG Applications;
 - b. Quality evaluation of SIG Application (and related documents, including Subproject Proposals). At this stage the School Subprojects Selection Committee would assess the SIG Applications (including Subproject Proposals), inter alia, against the criteria provided in Section 4.2.2, and an evaluation grid will be filled-in for each evaluated SIG Application.

³ Details on the use of savings from underspent School Subproject budgets are provided by Section 3.1.

79. Applicants have the opportunity to submit complaints to MOER/PMT email (egip@mec.gov.md) should evaluation/selection at any step of this Section 4.1 resulted into an error or irregularity, including an apparent infringement of their rights and/or other SIG Program terms and conditions, apparent unfair evaluation of their SIG Application. Each and all complaints shall be submitted, reviewed and solved within the Project's Grievance Redress Mechanism described in POM. No WB and MoER decisions related to SIG Applications under the SIG Program at Step 5 of this Section 4.1 can be made unless each and all complaints are resolved.

4.2. Overview and tentative timeline of Calls for proposals

80. The SIG Program will be operationalized through one or more Calls for proposals.

81. The duration of a Subproject Proposal implementation under SIG Program shall be up to 12 months from the SIG Agreement signing date or any other period as agreed by the Bank, but not exceeding September 30, 2027.

82. The Subproject Proposal duration must be planned as the total number of months needed to fully implement it without any specific dates.

83. A tentative SIG Application submission, approval and implementation process and estimative timeline are provided in the Table 3 below.

Table 3. SIG Application, approval and implementation timeline

Activity	Estimated period/ deadline
Launch of Call for proposals	December 2024
Receipt of SIG applications	December 2024
Compliance evaluation of SIG applications	January - February 2024
Facilitation of preparation of Subproject Proposals ⁴ , including: - <i>Procurement of Training & consultancy services; and</i> - <i>Contract execution;</i>	March – April 2025
Preparation and submission of Subproject Proposals to PMT	April – June 2025
Quality evaluation of Subproject Proposals, including PMT assistance to improve non-performing Subproject Proposals	June – July 2025
Selection and approval of 120 School Subprojects	July 2025
Preparation, clearance and signing of 120 SIG Agreements	August – September 2025
Batch 1 implementation (60 School Subprojects)	
Procurement (launch to contract signing)	July – December 2025
SIG implementation (contract execution)	September 2025 – August 2026
School Subproject Final Reports submitted to PMT	September 2026
Draft SIG Program Final Report finalized (Batch 1)	October 2026
Batch 2 implementation (60 School Subprojects)	
Procurement (launch to contract signing)	July – December 2026
SIG implementation (contract execution)	July 2026 – June 2027
School Subproject Final Reports submitted to PMT	July 2027
Draft SIG Program Final Report developed (Batch 1+Batch 2)	September 2027
SIG Program Closing Plan	
Government Decision on transfer of goods from MoER to Schools (Batch 1 + Batch 2)	October – December 2027
Draft SIG Program Final Report finalized	December 2027

⁴ More details are provided in Step 3 under Section 4.1.

84. Activities and periods/deadlines provided by Table 3 of this Section 4.2 are tentative and estimated, hence day-by-day implementation of SIG Program activities might deviate from them. Such situation shall not cause amendment of this Manual.

4.3. Call for proposals

85. PMT and the MoER representatives will organize launch events for Calls for proposals to communicate to stakeholders the SIG Program objectives, key dates, and administrative procedures.

86. All the events shall include a clear recognition of the Bank and GPE contribution to the SIG Program activities.

87. The information about the SIG Program (including but not limited to the types of support that will be offered to potential Applicants for SIG Application preparation⁵, especially to GEIs with low capacity) will be disseminated to all potential SIG Applicants through the most appropriate channels for communicating such as:

- a. Publishing the guides for the calls, as well as other information, on the MoER social media pages, hotline and website - <https://mec.gov.md/ro>, as well as the SIG Program web page - <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/programul-de-granturi-scolare-pgs>;
- b. Newsletters and e-mails to GEIs and LPAs;
- c. Dissemination meetings;
- d. One or two info days/information seminars, if needed/required;
- e. Media, etc.

88. During the period opened for Call of proposals, the PMT will provide necessary information/clarifications to potential Applicants during information events and/or upon their requests, including via official SIG Program email: programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md.

4.4. SIG Application submission and compliance evaluation

89. The SIG Applicant is ultimately responsible for preparing and submitting the SIG Application.

4.4.1. Preparation of SIG Application. List of required documents

90. The SIG Application (package) shall contain the following documents prepared in line with the eligibility criteria provided in Chapter 3 and provisions of this Chapter 4 with clear equity focus:

- a. An official letter from the Applicant, which confirms the interest to participate in the SIG Program and includes the list of submitted documents;
- b. SIG Application form filled in as per the template provided by Annex 1;

⁵ More details are provided in Step 3 under Section 4.1.

- c. Document confirming the total number of students enrolled by October 1 of the 2024-2025 school year;
- d. Document confirming the teachers contracted full-time and certified in each discipline envisaged in the SIG Application ;
- e. Document confirming the GEI is not undergoing a liquidation or reorganization process (merger or absorption) as a legal entity, and has not been planned for liquidation or reorganization (merger or absorption) in the following 10 years.

91. The SIG Application shall be fully filled in and the attached supporting documents proving the eligibility of Applicant shall be stamped, and signed by the GEI representatives before submission. Alternatively, the SIG Application and additional documents might be electronically signed as provided by Section 4.4.2.

92. The SIG Application must contain all the information required. The Applicant has the right to add any additional information it deems important that is not requested with the SIG Application.

4.4.2. Submission procedure

93. The SIG Application (with required documents) shall be submitted before the deadline set by MoER, on paper format, in one (1) original and two (2) copies, each in sealed, signed, and stamped envelope. All three sealed envelopes should be incorporated in one sealed envelope.

94. SIG Application must be submitted in a sealed envelope, by hand-delivery, at the address: 180 Stefan cel Mare Boulevard, 13th floor, office no. 1314, Chisinau, Moldova, in attention to EQIP Project Coordinator.

95. The outer envelope must bear the name of the Project (EQIP) and/or the name of the SIG Program, the full name and address of the Applicant.

96. The next working day of the call of proposal closure, the Applicant should send the electronic format of the SIG Application (submitted earlier on paper format) on the official e-mail of the SIG Program (programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md) and should contain a .pdf version including signatures and stamps of exactly the same documents as the original paper version.

97. Alternatively to paper format described in this Section 4.4.2, the SIG Application (including each separated related document/file) might be equally signed with electronic advanced qualified signature by authorized person and submitted to MoER at the SIG Program's official email: programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md. This electronically signed and sent SIG Application (including attached documents) has the same legal status as the SIG Application sent paper based and shall be considered and reviewed accordingly.

98. Applicants shall be notified on the receipt of SIG Applications by reply email message from the SIG Program's email (programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md) to the School's email message via which the SIG Application was received.

99. All SIG Applications received will be registered by the PMT. A unique registration number will be assigned to each SIG Applications.

100. No SIG Applications will be accepted after the deadline.

4.4.3. Compliance evaluation procedure

101. All envelopes and emails with SIG Applications received will be opened by the SIG Officers during the opening session organized after the Call of proposal deadline. During this session, all SIG Applications will be screened and reviewed by SIG Officers, and the SIG Application Compliance Evaluation Grid (Annex 4) will be filled in.

102. As part of compliance evaluation review, PMT (MoER) is entitled to request from public authorities and institutions, and/or interrogate any public register/data, and use the received information to

103. For the received SIG Applications from the eligible GEIs that are not meeting initial eligibility criteria from compliance evaluation perspective (information and/or documents are totally or partially missing or incorrect/false) the GOs will have up to one month to collect the missing and/or correct information/documents.

104. Only those SIG applications that are positively evaluated against all aspects of compliance evaluation are qualified for Step 3 as mentioned in Section 4.1 above.

105. After the compliance evaluation, a report would be issued indicating:

- a. A list of the SIG Applications qualified for the Step 3;
- b. A list of SIG Applications rejected, and the individual reasons;

106. Once the process is completed, a standard reply letter would be sent to each Applicant indicating if qualified or not for Step 3, and if not, mentioning the specific reason.

107. The Compliance Evaluation Report is submitted to the Bank for clearance and, afterwards to the School Subprojects Selection Committee for validation.

4.5. Subproject Proposal submission and quality evaluation

108. The Applicant is ultimately responsible for preparing and submitting the Subproject Proposal (and other documents, if/where required/needed), which is/are part of SIG Application.

4.5.1. Subproject Proposal preparation and submission

109. Based on Applicant information gained in compliance evaluation stage, PMT will design and implement a set of information & training activities for Applicants qualified for Step 3 as per Section 4.1 above in order to facilitate preparation and submission of Subproject Proposals.

110. List of additional documents (to SIG Application) to be submitted to MoER/PMT at Step 3 includes the following:

- a. Subproject Proposal as per template provided in Annex 5;
- b. An official (free form) declaration from Applicant's administrator (if Applicant is a legal entity) or from LPA authorized representative (if Applicant is not a legal entity) certifying the following:

- (i) Proposed activities have not been financed, and/or are not being currently financed, and/or are not expected to be financed (partially or totally) in the future within other financial mechanisms;
- (ii) Proposed activities have been consulted with the school community, including but not limited to parents, students, teachers, LPA, business community; and evidences are attached;
- (iii) Applicant is not undergoing a liquidation or reorganization process (merger or absorption) as a legal entity, and has not been planned for liquidation or reorganization (merger or absorption) in the following 10 years;
- (iv) All documents and information provided under the SIG Application, including Subproject Proposal and all other related documents are complete and correct; and
- (v) He/she has sufficient powers and authority to sign any document on behalf and on account of the Applicant, including the School In-Kind Grant Agreement (if approved).

111. PMT is entitled to require and receive from an Applicant or a third party any additional information (including explanations or confirmations) and/or documents related to the Applicant and its SIG Application (including related documents), should compliance with initial eligibility criteria be questioned (as per Section 3.2.1), comments or concerns raised by Environmental and/or Social Specialist during evaluation, as well as any other uncertainties appeared in relation with the Applicant or its SIG Application.

112. Subproject Proposal and declaration shall be electronically signed and submitted in the same way as Section 4.4.2 provides for submission of electronic SIG Applications, only to SIG Program email. No paper-based dossiers will be accepted.

113. Applicants shall be notified on the receipt of documents mentioned under this Section 4.2.1 by reply email message from the SIG Program's email (programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md) to the Applicants' emails.

114. No documents will be accepted after the deadline set up and announced publicly by MoER.

4.5.2. Quality evaluation

115. Proposals will be admitted to qualitative evaluation only if all requested documents (and information) as per Section 4.2.1 have been received by MoER/PMT in the requested format and content.

116. Proposals will be evaluated against the following quality evaluation criteria:

- a. Management and technical soundness of the proposal;
- b. Potential impact on target group;
- c. Results-based focus;
- d. Communications and dissemination strategy to inform about the results of the initiative; and

- e. Integration of cross-cutting themes of gender equality and environmental sustainability.

117. **Eligibility:** The program will support **(a) in-service teacher professional development opportunities and (b) projects promoting innovative pedagogical practices in several priority areas**. These Priority Areas eligible for financing under the SIG Program are stated in Section 3.3 of this SIGOM. The Proposal must be free from any potential legal controversy.

118. Quality evaluation is performed individually and independently by the members of the School Subprojects Selection Committee (Selection Committee) in accordance with the quality evaluation criteria set out in the template SIG Application Qualitative Evaluation Grid (Annex 6). Each Selection Committee member offers a score for every Proposal evaluated.

119. Only SIG Applications with a score of a minimum of 70% of the total number of points will be considered for SIGs.

120. It is envisaged for two batches of 60 SIGs per one batch to be offered. However, the final decision on the number of awarded grants will be made by the MoER in coordination with the Bank depending on the quality of SIG Applications and availability of funds.

4.6. SIG Application selection and approval procedures

121. The final score per Applicant, that will be used in the contest, is calculated as follows:

- a. Average score of quality evaluations conducted by the Selection Committee;
- b. In case Proposal score is less than 70%, this proposal will not be considered for SIG.

122. The SIG Officer would create an Evaluation Report that shall contain the following information:

- a. Entire information on SIG Application submitted;
- b. Detailed information on score obtained by all proposals, and each one ranking;
- c. Copies of all completed evaluation grids for each of the proposal;
- d. List of proposals with final ranking in descending order;
- e. List of institutions, with proposals, recommended to be selected for SIG award.

123. The Selection Committee approves the list of selected GEIs to be offered SIGs and amount allocated per each GEI. The final decision of the Selection Committee is endorsed by the MoER Order with prior written No Objection from the Bank (in compliance with para 35 of Appendix to the GPE Grant Agreement). The Bank No objection shall be issued and the MoER Order shall be signed not earlier than finalization of all complaints resolution procedures according to GRM as provided by POM, if any.

124. The PMT/MoER will notify, via project official e-mail (eqip@mec.gov.md), all Applicants on the results of the Selection Committee using letter on the acceptance/rejection of application. For rejection of application would be specified the reason.

125. Once selection is completed by the Selection Committee and the MoER Order is signed (with prior written No Objection from the Bank), the information on the awarded Schools is made publicly available on the MoER's website (www.mec.gov.md).

126. All original documents of both evaluations shall be kept in the Project archives.

4.7. School Subprojects Selection Committee

127. The School Subprojects Selection Committee shall be nominated by MoER before the deadline of Call for proposals or afterwards but not later than finalization of compliance evaluation stage, with the support of the PMT, and would have the following composition:

- a. MoER State Secretary – Chair Person;
- b. A representative of the General Education Department of MoER - member;
- c. A representative of the Division of monitoring and evaluation in general education of MoER - member;
- d. A representative of the National Agency for Curriculum and Evaluation (NACE) - member;
- e. A representative of the Center for IT in Education - member;
- f. SIG Officers (two members) who would execute administrative functions:
 - Evaluate proposal budgets to be in line with financial limits, distribution per School Subproject categories, eligibility of costs or unrealistic figures, and all other financial issues related to School Subproject;
 - Gather the evaluation results, grids, comments and score offered by Selection Committee members and prepare a list of the proposals ranked by score.

128. MoER representatives delegated to implementation of SIG Program, together with PMT, would have the overall coordination role and will supervise all SIG steps including application, evaluation, selection, complaints and awarding of SIGs.

129. All the members of Selection Committee would need to declare any possible conflict of interest and sign a declaration in this sense. The Declaration would be signed before any assessment action in accordance with World Bank Procurement Guidance on Conflict of Interest in Evaluation Committees, published in January, 2020.

5. SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANT AGREEMENT

130. A template SIG Agreement with approved Applicants (legal entities) is provided by Annex 6.

131. The negotiation process will begin after the selected Applicants are announced. All elements of the SIG Application may be subject to negotiation between the parties, but without significant changes to the original content of the SIG Application. The final agreed content of the SIG Application, including the School Subproject, will become an integral part of the SIG Agreement signed between the MoER and the School.

132. After the notification of Applicants, the PMT will organize meetings with selected Applicants aiming at providing them with information regarding various rules and procedures that have to be followed during realization of School Subprojects and addressing any issue that is specific for each of the awarded School Subprojects. As part of that, Applicants will be informed about their obligations to comply with continued eligibility criteria set forth in Section 3.2.2.

133. The SIG Agreements shall be signed with Schools after the final awarding letter of the SIG was sent by the PMT/MoER.

134. The MoER retains the right to verify School execution of SIG Agreement (including implementation of School Subproject) and this Manual (including compliance with continued eligibility criteria under Section 3.2.2). Should non-compliance be identified, provisions of Section 3.2.2 shall be applied (considering SIG Agreement).

135. During implementation, the School will execute all roles, responsibilities and obligations as provided by the SIG Agreement and School Subproject, including reporting tasks as described in Chapter 9.

136. The procedures and documents/forms to be used are described in this Manual. However, the Applicant or School may contact the SIG officer in order to obtain necessary explanations if needed.

6. PROCUREMENT

6.1. General rules for procurements

137. These procurement arrangements will be applied for procurement under the Component 1.3 of EQIP.

138. Procurement under the Component 1.3 will be carried out in compliance with the provisions of the Loan Agreement, GPE Grant Agreement and ELP Grant Agreement (referred to as “Agreements” for the purposes of this Chapter 6), EQIP Project operations Manual and based on the Bank Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing (IPF) Borrowers – Procurement in IPF of Goods, Works, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services from November 2020 (hereinafter referred to as “Procurement Regulations”), and with the Bank Anti-Corruption Guidelines.

139. For each contract to be financed by the Project under this Component 1.3, different procurement/selection methods for Goods, Non-consulting Services and Consulting Services, the estimated costs, the review requirements, and time frame are mentioned in the Project Procurement Plan (Project PP).

140. The PP will be prepared on the basis of School Subprojects and SIG Agreements. PMT will explore the opportunity of grouping those procurements.

141. The PP for the entire scope of the Component 1.3 is uploaded in the Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP).

142. No procurement will be carried out for any activity that is not included in the PP in STEP and cleared by the Bank.

143. The procurement under SIG Program shall be carried out in a centralized manner by the MoER and PMT.

144. The PMT and will assume the overall procurement function for their respective component, including coordination of the preparation of terms of references and technical specifications, procurement documents, and organization of procurement processes.

145. To support the MoER, the procurement specialists hired under PMTs will be responsible to carry out all steps in the tendering process, such as preparation of procurement documentation, short-listing, negotiating contracts, maintaining an adequate filling in STEP, updating the procurement plan, etc.

146. Detailed description and implementation arrangements of procurement process under the Component 1.3 are presented below:

Table 5. Procurement process under Component 1.3

#	Procurement steps	Responsible entity	Indicative timeframe (weeks)
1.	Preparation of ToRs and Technical Specifications	GEI with support of MoER/PMT will prepare the draft TORs and Technical Specifications. The role of PMT is to align the TORs/specification to be in line with World Bank and Procurement requirements.	As per Procurement Plan

2.	Approval of ToR and technical specifications	MoER will approve the final drafts of ToR and technical specifications	1-2 weeks
3.	Preparation of Procurement Documentation ⁶	PMT	According to the Procurement Plan
4.	Approval of Procurement Documentation	WB (for ToRs for consulting services and Bidding Documents for activities subject to prior review) - for all components, except Grants Program	1-2 weeks ⁷
5.	Publishing of Specific Procurement Notices	MoER with support of PMT	1 week
6.	Issuance of Procurement Documentation	PMT	Upon request from potential Applicants/Bidders
7.	Obtaining of bids/proposals up to the deadline and public opening ⁸	PMT and Evaluation Committees	According to the rules for each type of selection method
8.	Bids/proposals evaluation	Evaluation Committees with PMT support ⁹	3-4 weeks for large contracts, 1-2 weeks for small contracts
9.	Notification of Intention to Award the Contract ¹⁰	PMT	2-5 days
10.	Standstill Period (Debriefing session)	PMT	1-2 weeks ¹¹
11.	Notification of Contract Award	PMT	1 week
12.	Publication of Contract Award Notice	MoER with support of PMT	2 weeks
13.	Contract signing	MoER will sign the contracts	1-3 weeks
14.	Contract management	MoER with the support of PMT	According to contract terms and conditions

147. The Evaluation Committees for procurements under the Project will be established by the MoER order.

148. The MoER will sign the contracts thus they will act as employers and PMT will ensure all the necessary procedures for the procurement of goods and services, in close coordination and approval with the Bank.

⁶ Complaints handling requirements should be in line with in the “Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers (Annex III) in case the SPDs are used. The Evaluation Committees, with the support of the PMT, including the procurement specialists, would be in charge for replying to the complains received under the project procurement process.

⁷ Applicable for Prior Review contracts only

⁸ The MoER, with support of PMT will inform through their website the representatives of civil society groups that may attend public bid openings and contract signing.

⁹ The Evaluation Committee will be assisted by the PMT experts on the technical, environmental, and social aspect

¹⁰ Applicable only in case of SPDs

¹¹ According to the rules for each type of selection method and in case SPDs are used.

7. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT. AUDIT

7.1. General Financial Procedures

149. EQIP financial management and audit, including the SIG Program (Component 1.3) is performed as provided by POM.

150. All SIG Program funding to be used to implement the School Subprojects will be kept in the EQIP treasury account.

151. No SIG Program funding shall be allocated for payments made for expenditures prior to the date of signature of the SIG Agreement.

7.2. Financial reports and audits

152. All goods (assets) procured under the School Subprojects will be transferred to Schools, put into operation and included in the School's asset ledger based on a Government Decision on transfer of goods (assets) in question and other applicable legislation from MoER to respective Schools.

153. Schools submit no financial reports to MoER/PMT.

154. The audits of the awarded SIGs would be conducted as part of overall Project audit to be carried out as provided by POM.

155. The audit scope for the proposed Project would be extended and would focus, inter alia, on verifying the compliance of Schools with the requirements established in the POM and this Manual.

156. PMT will duly inform each School about the timeline of annual audit and facilitate the communication between them and the Project auditors.

157. Schools shall ensure timely and promptly submission of School Subproject documents requested by to the auditors.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL MANAGEMENT

158. The objective of the E&S management is to identify, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts on the natural and built environment and communities in order to ensure the project contributes to the development of education sector in Moldova while being in compliance with the legal provisions and standards for environmental protection, social inclusion, gender equity, health and safety and labor protection and nondiscrimination principles.

159. The environmental and social management under the EQIP are guided by the environmental and social instruments prepared by the MoER before project appraisal and disclosed in country (published by the MoER on its web site - <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/proiectul-imbunatatirea-calitatii-educatiei>) and on the Bank website.

160. The Project will be implemented in accordance with the Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) and the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP), in a manner acceptable to the World Bank. Thus, as per requirement of the ESCP, the prepared Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and Labor Management Procedures (LMP) provides the necessary environmental and social conditions and measures to be taken, safety measures for workers, guidelines and measures to be taken by the small works contractors to ensure that work conditions, health, safety and environmental norms are met and mitigate the impacts on the workers and community.

161. The SEP's provisions, including a Grievance Redress Mechanism at Project level, and the LMP's provisions, including the grievance mechanism for workers, will be applied for all Project's beneficiaries, workers and other stakeholders, in order to provide the information in a timely, relevant, understandable and accessible manner and to avoid the discrimination, intimidation, coercion and interference during the implementation of all Project's components and activities.

162. The environmental and social management of the EQIP Project is based on the relevant Moldovan legislation as well as on the applicable World Bank Environmental and Social Standards which are mentioned below: (<https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/environmental-and-social-framework/brief/environmental-and-social-standards>)

- a. ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts
- b. ESS2 Labor and Working Conditions
- c. ESS3 Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management
- d. ESS4 Community Health and Safety Relevant
- e. ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure.

163. The EQIP E&S Specialists will provide guidance and support Applicants/Schools subprojects representatives in management all potential environmental and social issues that may arise during the provision of In-Kind Grants to schools. The EQIP E&S Specialists will support Applicants/Schools in implementation of Environmental and Social Instruments such as ESMF, Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), Labor Management Procedure (LMP), Gender

Base Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) Action Plan and management of grievance redress mechanism including channels dissemination, grievances resolution, recording and reporting.

8.1. Environmental and social instruments

164. E&S guidelines are to ensure that all due diligence required under the project adhered properly and a systematic manner. In this regard, several documents have been prepared to ensure that E&S aspects of the project are addressed:

Table 6. Documents and their purpose under the E&S guidelines¹²

Document	Purpose
Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)	It sets out the principles, policies and procedures for environmental and social management that the Government of Moldova (GoM) agrees to employ in the context of the EQIP. The ESMF outlines the project context, possible environmental and social impacts, and their management. The document meets the requirements of the relevant World Bank Environmental and Social Standards and Moldovan legislation and describes the procedural responses to identifying and managing impacts throughout the project. The full document could be found on the following link https://edu.gov.md/sites/default/files/p179363_esmf_updated_final.pdf .
Labor Management Procedures (LMP)	The LMP enables identify main labor requirements and risks associated with it under the project and determines the resources necessary to address labor issues under the project. The full document could be found on the following link https://edu.gov.md/sites/default/files/p179363_lmp_final.pdf .
Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)	It sets out the stakeholder engagement and documentation disclosure framework in the context of the EQIP, including the GRM. The full document could be found on the following link https://edu.gov.md/sites/default/files/p179363_sep_updated_final.pdf
Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)	It sets out the summary of actions, plans and documentation that guide the implementation of the project. This is the legally binding document that Government has signed with Bank, and all the actions listed under this document will be assessed during the missions. The ESCP requires compliance with all the actions, plans and documentation. The full document could be found on the following link https://edu.gov.md/sites/default/files/179363_eqip_escp_for_negociations_final.pdf .
Gender Base Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) Action Plan	It sets out the risks of GBV, SEA/SH by project personnel of the EQIP and mitigation measures. The full document could be found on the following link https://edu.gov.md/sites/default/files/p179363_seash_action_plan_final.pdf

¹² Other E&S related documents are described in POM.

8.2. Environmental and Social responsibilities

165. The MoER shall ensure that all School Subprojects are carried out in accordance with the Environmental and Social Standards, in a manner acceptable to the Bank. Specifically:

- a. The measures and actions specified in the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) are implemented with due diligence and efficiency, and as further specified in the ESCP;
- b. Sufficient funds are available to cover the costs of implementing the ESCP;
- c. Policies, procedures and qualified staff are maintained to enable it to implement the ESCP, as further specified in the ESCP; and
- d. the ESCP or any provision thereof, is not amended, revised or waived, except as the Bank shall otherwise agree in writing and the MoER has, thereafter, disclosed the revised ESCP.

166. Thus, MoER shall as the EQIP Implementation Agency:

- a. Take all measures necessary on its part to collect, compile, and furnish to the Bank through regular reports, with the frequency specified in the ESCP, and promptly in a separate report or reports, if so requested by the Bank, information on the status of compliance with the ESCP and the management tools and instruments referred to therein, all such reports in form and substance acceptable to the Bank, setting out, inter alia: (i) the status of implementation of the ESCP; (ii) conditions, if any, which interfere or threaten to interfere with the implementation of the ESCP; and (iii) corrective and preventive measures taken or required to be taken to address such conditions; and
- b. Promptly notify the Bank of any incident or accident related to or having an impact on the Project which has, or is likely to have, a significant adverse effect on the environment, the affected communities, the public or workers, including, in accordance with the ESCP, the instruments referenced therein and the Environmental and Social Standards.

167. No adverse impacts such as involuntary land acquisition, as well as impacts on indigenous peoples, biodiversity and habitats are expected. If any adverse impacts are identified, the MoER will exclude these activities from the Schools subprojects.

168. Issues of social inclusion, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and inclusive public to enable a more equal access to School Subproject benefits would be considered at the design and implementation stages. This means that the educational support activities, and interventions would have due emphasis and measures to ensure beneficiaries (students, teachers and all users of education facilities) with physical disabilities, represented poor and marginalized communities (like Roma, refugee children from Ukraine) have equal access to educational interventions supported under the School Subproject.

169. The MoER has prepared a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), which maps the main stakeholders and project beneficiaries. The document shall be used by Schools in the School Subproject implementation including public consultations and information disclosure. The MoER Social and Environmental specialists will provide guidance on SEP implementation.

170. Schools will offer full support to the Social and Environmental Specialists from MoER, as their main responsibility is to ensure that proper actions and measures carried out

during the component 1 implementation to avoid or prevent the potential impacts and risks identified in the ESMF:

- a. To ensure the implementation of the Environmental and Social Framework (ESMF, SEP, GRM, LMP and GBV-SEA/SH Action Plan;
- b. Universal access will be considered in the physical design of facilities to minimize the need for physical exertion and also to ensure safety of students with disabilities in the event of emergency and in the regular use of facilities.
- c. Curricula development and training of teachers for universal access/equal opportunity in Education;
- d. Include Code of Conduct (CoC) to prevent and manage incidents of SEA/SH and risk of violence against children, and to prevent violence, mistreatment or discrimination being caused or exacerbated by the range of stakeholders working on the project activities;
- e. Enhance the existing dispute resolution mechanisms for education workers;
- f. Establish, publicize, maintain, and operate an accessible grievance mechanism, to receive and facilitate resolution of concerns and grievances in relation to the Project.

171. The role of the Social and Environmental Specialists are to:

- a. Provide assistance to the School to determine the potential social and environmental impacts that can be generated by proposed activities supported under the Project as well as prescribe the required mitigation actions to be taken;
- b. Monitor and report on a regular basis the effects on the environment and human population that financed activities may provoke and ensure that mitigation is carried out.

172. The Social and Environmental Specialists would also regularly and selectively visit School Subprojects to provide supervision on social and environmental risk management.

173. All procurement shall be “green” and the quality of laboratory equipment shall be under the “green” conditions (energy efficiency, emission level). The Social and Environmental Specialists would monitor this aspect as well. Thus, Beneficiary would ensure proper access and offer all required documents.

174. Environmental and Social Specialists are entitled to perform site visits to Applicants and Schools in order to efficiently monitor implementation of and compliance with ESMF.

175. Reporting requirements on Environmental and Social aspects applicable to SIGs, as well as management of related risks, are detailed in Chapter 5 of POM.

176. Any incident related to School Subproject activities shall be immediately reported to MoER/ PMT/ Social and Environmental Specialists.

8.3. Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

8.3.1. EQIP GRM

177. EQIP has established a project-specific GRM, which is described in the SEP and the EQIP POM. The main goal of the GRM is to strengthen responsibility and involvement of beneficiaries and stakeholders provide information and/or express legal dissatisfaction related to School Subproject activities.

178. The GRM allows to identify and resolute problems affecting the projects activities, aims to reduce the risk of unintentionally affecting citizens, beneficiaries and is an important element in receiving, recording and resolving complaints.

179. The schools who received grants shall include on their websites and/or social media webpages the reference to project GRM.

180. The existing school's grievance channels should be also accessible for stakeholders for submitting grievances.

181. A person should be appointed for each school subproject to collect grievances, record and report them to the MoER.

182. Social and Environmental Specialists from the MoER will provide guidance to the grievance focal points of school subprojects on how to manage, record, and report grievances.

183. All complaints, petitions are registered and kept in the EQIP register. Complaints may be expressed at any time throughout the implementation of the sub- project.

184. The PMT will go through the following steps to deal with the grievance:



185. Any comments or concerns can be brought to the attention by the complainers verbally or in writing (by post or e-mail) or by filling in a grievance form.

186. The following timeframe will be used:

- Written acknowledgement of receipt of the grievance: within 5 days of receiving the grievance;
- Proposed resolution: within 15 days of receiving the grievance.

187. Specifically, nominated and trained members of staff will record grievance information in a grievance log. This will include:

- Stakeholder name and contact details;

- b. Details of the grievance and how and when it was submitted, acknowledged, responded to and closed out.

188. All complaints will be verified by the PMT in the Grievance Registry and assigned a number, and acknowledged within 15 calendar days. The Registry will have all necessary elements to disaggregate the grievance by gender of the person submitting it as well as by type of grievance. Each grievance will be verified in the registry with the following information: a) description of grievance, b) date of receipt of grievance and when acknowledgement returned to the complainant; c) description of actions taken (investigation, corrective measures, and preventive measures); d) date of resolution and closure provision of feedback to the complainant.

189. In cases when the grievance/complaint is indefinite or not clear enough, the PMT will assist and provide advice in formulating/redrafting the submission, in order for the grievance/complaint to become clear, for purposes of an informed decision by the PMT, in the best interests of persons affected by the Project.

190. If the PMT is not able to address the issues raised by immediate corrective action, a long-term corrective action will be identified. The complainant will be informed about the proposed corrective action and follow-up of corrective action within 25 calendar days upon the acknowledgement of grievance. In situation when the PMT is not able to address the particular issue verified through the grievance mechanism or if action is not required, it will provide a detailed explanation/ justification on why the issue was not addressed. The response will also contain an explanation on how the person/ organization that raised the complaint can proceed with the grievance in case the outcome is not satisfactory. At all times, complainants may seek other legal remedies in accordance with the legal framework of Republic of Moldova, including formal judicial appeal.

8.3.2. World Bank Grievance Redress System

191. Communities and individuals who believe that they are adversely affected by a Bank supported project may submit complaints to existing project-level grievance redress mechanisms or the WB's Grievance Redress Service (GRS). The GRS ensures that complaints received are promptly reviewed in order to address project-related concerns. Project affected communities and individuals may submit their complaint to the WB's independent Inspection Panel which determines whether harm occurred, or could occur, as a result of WB non-compliance with its policies and procedures.

192. Complaints may be submitted at any time after concerns have been brought directly to the Bank's attention, and Bank Management has been given an opportunity to respond. For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank's corporate Grievance Redress Service (GRS), please visit <http://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/products-and-services/grievance-redress-service>. For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank Inspection Panel, please visit www.inspectionpanel.org.

Environmental and Social Management Reporting

193. Reporting requirements include both internal reporting of environmental and social aspects of project implementation and reporting to external parties. These requirements are described in the main EQIP POM and are the same for School Grant activities.

9. MONITORING & EVALUATION. REPORTING

9.1. Monitoring and Evaluation under the SIG Program

194. Following the award of SIG, the School will implement the School Subproject with due diligence and efficiency and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the SIG Agreement.

195. SIG Officers together with Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist of the PMT in cooperation with responsible person of the MoER will perform supervision of School Subprojects and SIGs, which includes participation in monitoring of School Subproject implementation and review of progress reports prepared by Schools.

196. Monitoring missions will be carried out once a year or with other frequency as necessary or required.

197. The evaluation would be done towards:

- a. Implementation of goals;
- b. Outstanding milestones and School Subproject indicators;
- c. Advancement of institutional commitments;
- d. Effective use of awarded SIGs.

198. School Subproject evaluation results may trigger follow-up actions, such as remedial actions, monitoring & support, or even termination of SIG Agreement and withdrawal of goods. Should these situations happen, provisions of Section 3.2.2 shall be applied.

199. A monitoring visit report will be elaborated by the PMT and presented to the School with information status. This shall serve as useful feedback to the School and guide their further implementation of the School Subprojects.

200. Consolidated information from monitoring visits reports will be included in Project Quarterly Progress Reports to the Bank.

9.2. Reporting

201. The School will prepare and submit to the MoER/PMT progress reports on quarterly basis (every 3 months). Progress reports shall contain information as provided by Annex 8, be signed by School authorized persons with qualified advanced electronic signature, and sent by email to SIG Program email (programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md). Alternatively, progress reports shall be hand signed by School authorized persons, and original papers be submitted/sent in a sealed envelope to the PMT official address: 180 Stefan cel Mare Boulevard, 13th floor, office no. 1314, Chisinau, MD-2004, Republica Moldova; in attention of EQIP Project Coordinator.

202. The purpose of progress reports is to show the progress in accordance with the plan for the School Subproject, to provide comprehensive information on realization and achievement of School Subproject milestones for the related period and to identify and explain problems.

203. Progress reports shall be submitted within the limits set up by Annex 8. In the case of delay of reports' submission, the School should submit a written electronically signed notification to the SIG Program email (programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md) and explain the reasons for such delay.

204. Final report. At completion of the School Subproject a final report prepared by the School will assess the results of the School Subproject against its agreed objectives. This final report will focus on outputs, results, outcomes (impact) and attainment of the agreed verifiable indicators that reflect the foreseen objectives.

205. The Schools can measure the indicators included in the Results Framework and Monitoring (Annex 3) Plan, which is the basis for the Project's progress and final reports with various evaluation instruments, including surveys¹³.

206. Schools shall keep all progress and final reports in School records/archives.

207. If certain changes occur in School Subproject activities (e.g. changes related to the realization of activities, deadlines, achieved results etc.) an electronically signed official letter should be submitted to the PMT - the SIG Program email (programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md), which should review the letter and decide on follow up actions (in coordination with the Bank, if necessary/required) for the purpose of continuation of SIG Agreement.

208. Upon receipt of final progress reports from Schools, the MoER/ PTM shall initiate procedures to close-out the School Subproject. Close-out procedures include approving all required reports.

209. Final report should be submitted by the School as provided by Annex 8, be signed by School authorized persons with qualified advanced electronic signature, and sent by email to SIG Program email (programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md).

210. Project QPRs back to the Bank shall contain information on closed-up School Subprojects, as well as other details, as provided by Annex 8.

¹³ To the extent possible, the MoER PMT will gather data from administrative or project sources to reduce the burden on schools, as key metrics like trained teachers, distributed textbooks, and enrolled children are already tracked through centralized processes.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Template SIG Application

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (EQIP)

SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANT PROGRAM

SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANT APPLICATION
(SIG APPLICATION)

Date: ____/____/20____

I. IDENTIFICATION DATA

Reference number (Code):	
Applicant's name:	
Applicant IDNO:	
Applicant contact details:	
- Contact person (Applicant representative):	
- Position:	
- Address:	
- Phone:	
- Email	
How did the applicant GEI learn about SIG Program (i.e. from the MoER Facebook, newspaper, radio, TV, website, word of mouth, etc.)	<i>(Please insert here)</i>

Question	Yes	No
Does the Applicant correspond to initial eligibility criteria?		
a) Is a public GEI located in the Republic of Moldova. Definition of GEI is provided by Section 1.6 of School In-Kind Grant Operations Manual (SIGOM);		
b) Is neither engaged in a liquidation or reorganization process (merger or absorption) as legal entity, nor is planned for liquidation or reorganization (merger or absorption) in the following 10 years. Applicants pursuing the legal registration procedure as legal entity (public institution) are eligible;		
c) Has minimum one teacher contracted full-time and certified in each discipline envisaged in the SIG Application;		
d) Has minimum one enrolled disadvantaged student;		
e) The proposal is in line with the SIG Program objectives i.e. aims to support (a) in-service teacher professional development opportunities and /or (b) projects promoting innovative pedagogical practices in several priority areas;		
Is the submitted SIG Application complete (includes all requested information, documents, sections, annexes, forms, and signatures)?		
The application package shall contain the following documents:		
(a) Official letter from the Applicant which includes the list of submitted documents;		
(b) SIG Application form filled out as per the template in Annex 1 to SIGOM;		
(c) Document confirming the total number of students enrolled by October 1 of the 2024-2025 school year;		

(d) Document confirming the teachers contracted full-time and certified in each discipline envisaged in the SIG Application;		
(e) Document confirming the GEI is not undergoing a liquidation or reorganization process (merger or absorption) as a legal entity, and has not been planned for liquidation or reorganization (merger or absorption) in the following 10 years.		
(f) Subproject Fiche as per Annex 2 to SIGOM.		

Instructions:

The GEI representative should put 'X' symbol to columns 'YES' in case the application package complies with eligibility criterion, or to column "NO" in case the application package does not comply with eligibility criterion.

GEI representative:

Name/signature: _____

Annex 2: Template Subproject Fiche

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (EQIP)

SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANT PROGRAM

SUBPROJECT FICHE

Project Title	
Applicant Institution	
Institution Address	
Contact Person	
Phone	
Email	
Project Duration	
Project Objectives (as per the Program)	
Priority Areas Addressed by the Project	
Main Activities	
Expected Results	
Estimated Project Budget, total, including:	
● Digital Equipment	
● Furniture and Supplies	
● Training	
● Educational Materials	
Impact and Sustainability of Subproject	

Annex 3. Results Framework and Monitoring

Results Framework and Monitoring

GPE and EQIP indicators:

- a. Number of textbooks purchased and distributed (baseline: 0; target: 600);
- b. Number of teachers trained (baseline: 0; target: 120);
- c. Number of children who will directly benefit from the grants (baseline: 0; target: 8,000):
 - Of which, girls (baseline: 0; target: 4,000);
 - Of which, children with a disability (baseline: 0; target: 100);
 - Of which, refugee children (baseline: 0; target: 70);
- d. Gender gap in STEM education reduced (baseline: 7%; target: 5%).
- e. Total number of beneficiaries
 - Students from poor families
 - Girls
 - Children with Disabilities
 - Roma students Refugee students from Ukraine
 - At-risk students falling behind academically
 - Students from rural areas
 - Teachers

Annex 4: Template SIG Application Compliance Evaluation Grid

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (EQIP)

SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANT PROGRAM

SIG APPLICATION COMPLIANCE EVALUATION GRID

Date: ____/____/20____

I. IDENTIFICATION DATA

Reference number (Code):	
Applicant's name:	
Applicant IDNO:	
Applicant contact details:	
- Contact person (Applicant representative):	
- Position:	
- Address:	
- Phone:	
- Email:	

II. Compliance Evaluation Grid

Question		Yes	No
1.	Is the proposal submitted on time?		
2.	Does the Applicant correspond to initial eligibility criteria?		
	a) Is a public GEI located in the Republic of Moldova. Definition of GEI is provided by Section 1.6 of School In-Kind Grant Operations Manual;		
	b) Is neither engaged in a liquidation or reorganization process (merger or absorption) as legal entity, nor is planned for liquidation or reorganization (merger or absorption) in the following 10 years. Applicants pursuing the legal registration procedure as legal entity (public institution) are eligible;		
	c) Has minimum one teacher contracted full-time and certified in each discipline envisaged in the SIG Application;		
	d) Has minimum one disadvantaged student enrolled;		
	e) The proposal is in line with the SIG Program objectives i.e. aims to support (a) in-service teacher professional development opportunities and/or (b) projects promoting innovative pedagogical practices in several priority areas;		
3.	Does the SIG Application meet the financial allocation criteria?		

	<i>(the proposal should not exceed the maximum amount described within Chapter 3.1 of the approved School In-Kind Grants Operations Manual).</i>		
	Is the SIG Application complete (includes all requested information, documents, sections, annexes, forms, and signatures)?		
	The application package shall contain the following documents:		
	(a) Official letter from the Applicant which includes the list of submitted documents;		
	(b) SIG Application form filled out as per the template in Annex 1 to SIGOM;		
4.	(c) Document confirming the total number of students enrolled by October 1 of the 2024-2025 school year;		
	(d) Document confirming teachers contracted full-time and certified in each discipline envisaged in the SIG Application;		
	(e) Document confirming the GEI is not undergoing a liquidation or reorganization process (merger or absorption) as a legal entity, and has not been planned for liquidation or reorganization (merger or absorption) in the following 10 years;		
	(f) Subproject Fiche as per Annex 2 to SIGOM.		

Instructions:

The internal assessor should put 'X' symbol to columns 'YES' in case the application package corresponds to eligibility criteria described in the Manual.

In case the answer is 'NO', please indicate which requirements have not been fulfilled.

Grid completed by:

Name and signature: _____

Annex 5: Template School Subproject structure

School Subproject Implementation Plan Template

1. SIG Project Title

[Insert Project Title]

2. School Information

- **Beneficiary School Name:** [Insert Name]
- **School Address:** [Insert Address]
- **Contact Person:** [Insert Name]
- **Position:** [Insert Position]
- **Contact Information:** [Insert Phone/Email]

3. Project Overview

- **Description of the Subproject:**
[Provide a brief description of the subproject.]

Proposed SIG Project Details

Describe the reasons motivating the request for SIG	
Provide a brief summary of the proposed subproject	

- **Target Audience:**
[Specify the target beneficiaries, e.g., students, teachers, community members.]

Target Beneficiaries' Details

Who will benefit from the SG project and how will these benefits be realized?						
Estimate the total number of beneficiaries. Please state if the below categories of target beneficiaries would benefit (Yes/No). If Yes, indicate the estimated numbers of target beneficiaries:						
Students from poor families	Students from rural areas	Girls in STEM	Roma students	Refugee students from Ukraine	At-risk students falling behind academically	Children with Disabilities and/or SEN

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

4. Objectives

- **Overall Objective:**

[State the main goal of the project. Describe how the proposed project corresponds to one or more of the SIG Program objectives]

- **Specific Objectives:**

SIG Project Objectives	Expected Outcomes
1. [Objective 1]	
2. [Objective 2]	
3. [Objective 3]	

5. Activities

Activity	Description	Responsible Person	Timeline	Resources Needed	Outputs and / or Deliverables
1. [Activity Title]	[Description of the activity]	[Name/Position]	[Start Date - End Date]	[List of resources]	
2. [Activity Title]	[Description of the activity]	[Name/Position]	[Start Date - End Date]	[List of resources]	
3. [Activity Title]	[Description of the activity]	[Name/Position]	[Start Date - End Date]	[List of resources]	

Estimated SIG Project Start Date	Estimated SIG Project End Date

Please include names and responsibilities of the key individuals involved in the implementation of the SIG project	
--	--

Describe how the activities and results of the proposed SIG project will be communicated and shared with the wider public.	
Describe whether the local authorities support and will be involved in the SIG project	

6. Budget

- **Total Budget Estimate:** [Insert Amount]

Item	Description	Estimated Cost (in USD)
1. [Item]	[Description]	[Cost]
2. [Item]	[Description]	[Cost]
3. [Item]	[Description]	[Cost]
Total		[Total Amount]

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Monitoring Plan:**
[Describe how the project will be monitored, including key performance indicators.]
- **Evaluation Plan:**
[Outline how the project's success will be evaluated, including any assessment tools or methods.]

8. Sustainability Plan

- **Sustainability Strategies:**
[Describe how the benefits of the project will be sustained after the funding period ends. Upon completion, will the SIG project continue to have an impact? If yes, how?]

9. Risk Management

- **Potential Risks:**
[Identify potential risks and challenges that may impact the project.]
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
[Describe strategies to mitigate these risks.]

10. Approval

- **Prepared By:**
[Name and Position]
- **Date:**
[Insert Date]
- **Approved By:**
[Name and Position]

- **Date of Approval:**
[Insert Date]

Annex 6: Template SIG Application Quality Evaluation Grid

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (EQIP)

SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANT PROGRAM

SIG APPLICATION QUALITY EVALUATION GRID

Date: __/__/20__

I. IDENTIFICATION DATA

Reference number (Code):	
Name of the applicant Institution:	
IDNO of applicant GEI:	
Proposal title:	
Priority areas:	Application of digital tools, and active and engaging learning experiences for students ☐ Effective student learning assessment and feedback practices used by teachers ☐ Active learning, collaborative learning, building a sense of community, belonging, and well-being of students ☐ Innovative remedial programs for students falling behind academically and disadvantaged students including Roma children, refugee students from Ukraine, and children with disabilities ☐ Girls' participation in the STEM fields ☐ Exchange experiences and mobility programs, creating and developing a community of practice in teaching innovations ☐
Amount requested (in USD)	_____ USD
Duration:	_____ months

Each section contains a box for comments. These comments should address the issues covered by that section. Comments **must** be made on each **section**. Extra space may be used for comments if required.

Note that upon request, applicants may be given the comments and justifications provided.

#	Criterion	Maximum points per category	Evaluation methodology	Rationale / Note
A	Management and technical soundness of the Subproject Proposal			
1	Clearly identified and described goals and activities	5	• Lack of clearly identified and described goals and activities - 0 points; • A small part (less than 50%) of clearly identified and described goals and activities - 1 point • Most of the set goals and activities (50-90%) are clearly identified and described - 2 points • All goals and activities (91-100%) are clearly identified and described - 3 points • All goals and activities (91-100%) are clearly identified and properly described and include innovative aspects - 5 points	
2	The resources (requested goods/equipment/materials and services) and related expenses for each activity are properly presented and are necessary for the realization of the activities	4	• Resources and related expenses for each activity are not adequately represented - 0 points • Resources or related expenses for part of the activities are not adequately represented - 1 point • The resources and related expenses for each activity are adequately represented, but some of them are not necessary for the realization of the project - 2 points • The resources and related expenses for each activity are adequately represented, but a small part of them is not necessary for the realization of the project – 3 points • The resources and related expenses for each activity are adequately represented and necessary for the realization of the project – 4 points	
3	Feasibility / attainability of activities (resources available on the market, organizational capacities and organizational setup are in place, sufficient time for implementation etc.)	4	• None of the activities is feasible/attainable in the given time frame and budget – 0 points • Small part of the activities (less than 50%) is feasible/attainable in the given time frame and budget – 1 point • Most activities (50-70%) are feasible/attainable within the given time frame and budget – 2 points • Almost all activities (71-90%) are feasible/attainable within the given time frame and budget – 3 points • All activities (91-100%) are fully feasible/attainable within the given time frame and budget (reasonableness of implementation schedule and budget) – 4 points	

B Potential impact on target group; results-based focus				
4	Impact on the EQIP's beneficiaries ¹⁴	4	• The target group (that has to benefit through the SIG Program): - is not defined: 0 points; - is not clearly defined: 2 points; - is clearly defined: 4 points;	
5	Applicant's number of enrolled students by October 1, 2024;	8	• Applicant has up to 300 students: 0 points; • Applicant has 301-600 students: 2 points; • Applicant has 601-900 students: 4 points; • Applicant has 901-1200 students: 6 points; • Applicant has 1201+ students: 8 points;	
6	Inclusion of disadvantaged students in target group	90	The target group (that has to benefit through the SIG Program) includes the following categories of disadvantaged students supported under the EQIP: a) Students from poor families: 0 students: 0 points; 1-15 students: 2 points; 16-30 students: 4 points; 31-45 students: 6 points; 46-60 students: 8 points; 61+ students: 10 points; b) Students from rural areas: 0 students: 0 points; 1-15 students: 2 point; 16-30 students: 4 points; 31-45 students: 6 points; 46-60 students: 8 points; 61+ students: 10 points; c) Girls in STEM: 0 students: 0 points; 1-5 students: 4 points; 6-10 students: 8 points; 11-15 students: 12 points; 16-20 students: 16 points; 21+ students: 20 points; d) Roma students: 0 students: 0 points; 1-5 students: 2 points; 6-10 students: 4 points; 11-15 students: 6 points; 16-20 students: 8 points; 21+ students: 10 points; e) Refugee students from Ukraine: 0 students: 0 points; 1-5 students: 2 points; 6-10 students: 4 points; 11-15 students: 6 points; 16-20 students: 8 points; 21+ students: 10 points; f) At-risk students falling behind academically: 0 students: 0 points; 1-15 students: 2 points; 16-30 students: 4 points;	

¹⁴ The focus on providing equal educational opportunities for disadvantaged students and thus promoting shared prosperity is at the core of the EQIP design.

			31-45 students: 6 points; 46-60 students: 8 points; 61+ students: 10 points; g) Students with disabilities and/or SEN: 0 students: 0 points; 1-5 students: 4 points; 6-10 students: 8 points; 11-15 students: 12 points; 16-20 students: 16 points; 21+ students: 20 points;	
7	The results framework and monitoring plan is relevant, and enables measuring of the effects from the activities (indicators are concrete and measurable) ¹⁵	4	• Lack of concrete and measurable indicators – 0 points • A small number (less than 50%) of specific and measurable indicators – 1 point • Most of the indicators (51-70%) are concrete and measurable - 2 points • Almost all indicators (71-90%) are concrete and measurable - 3 points • All indicators (91-100%) are concrete and measurable – 4 points	
8	Sustainability considerations ¹⁶	12	• Project activities are not sustainable after 1 year from project end-date – 0 points; • Project activities are sustainable after 1 year from project end-date – 3 points; • Project activities are sustainable after 2 years from project end-date – 6 points; • Project activities are sustainable after 3 years from project end-date – 9 points; • Project activities are sustainable after 4 years from project end-date – 12 points;	
C Communication and dissemination strategy to inform about the results of the initiative				
9	Communications and dissemination strategy	8	• Proposal shows that the proposed activities and results will not be communicated – 0 points; • Proposal shows that the proposed activities and results will be poorly communicated – 2 points;	

¹⁵ Is the proposal result-oriented?

- 1) The proposal clearly shows what difference the implementing school wants to make with this SIG initiative and that there is a clear rationale for the proposal - proposal clearly describes the essential problems or issues that it intends to address;
- 2) Proposal represents a results-oriented initiative with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) results;
- 3) Outputs and/or deliverables represent a logical consequence of each proposed activity;
- 4) Proposal clearly describes objectives, outcomes (to the greatest extent possible describing changes in a balanced qualitative and quantitative manner), activities to achieve those and outputs and/or deliverables linked to every activity;
- 5) Proposal addresses one of more areas covered by the GPE/EQIP indicators including:
 - a. Number of textbooks purchased and distributed (baseline: 0; target: 600);
 - b. Number of teachers trained (baseline: 0; target: 120);
 - c. Number of children who will directly benefit from the grants (baseline: 0; target: 8,000):
 - i. Of which, girls (baseline: 0; target: 4,000);
 - ii. Of which, children with a disability (baseline: 0; target: 100);
 - iii. Of which, refugee children (baseline: 0; target: 70);
 - d. Gender gap in STEM education reduced (baseline: 7%; target: 5%).

¹⁶ The sustainability of project activities refers to the ability of a project's outcomes, benefits, and impacts to continue over the long term, even after the project itself has ended.

			• Proposal shows that the proposed activities and results will be acceptably communicated – 4 points; • Proposal shows that the proposed activities and results will be well communicated – 6 points; • Proposal shows that the proposed activities and results will be excellently communicated – 8 points;	
10	Representatives from the school community (students and parents, LPA, civil sector, and business community) are directly involved in the activities.	12	• Community representatives are not involved or are indirectly involved in activities – 0 points • Parents are directly involved in activities – 3 points; • LPA is directly involved in activities – 3 points; • Civil sector is directly involved in activities – 3 points; • Business community is directly involved in activities – 3 points;	
D Integration of cross-cutting themes of gender equality and environmental sustainability				
11	Cross-cutting themes of gender equality	12	• Gender equality is not considered in the proposal – 0 points; • Gender equality has basic considerations in the proposal – 4 points; • Gender equality has average considerations in the proposal – 8 points; • Gender equality has strong considerations in the proposal – 12 points;	
12	Cross-cutting themes of environmental sustainability	12	• Environmental sustainability is addressed in a manner that lessens negative environmental impact and to the greatest extent possible seeks to proactively improve environmental conditions – 0 points; • Environmental sustainability is addressed in a manner that lessens negative environmental impact and to low/basic extent seeks to proactively improve environmental conditions – 4 points; • Environmental sustainability is addressed in a manner that lessens negative environmental impact and to significant extent seeks to proactively improve environmental conditions – 8 points; • Environmental sustainability is addressed in a manner that lessens or completely avoids negative environmental impact and to the greatest extent possible seeks to proactively improve environmental conditions – 12 points;	
Total		175		

Grid completed by:

Name and signature: _____

Annex 7: Template School In-Kind Grant Agreement

SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANT AGREEMENT

No dated.....

concluded between:

Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova, hereinafter referred to as “**MoER**”, address: 1 Paiata Marii Adunari Naționale, Governmental House, Chișinău, Republic of Moldova, represented by, as legal representative of the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova,

and

.....
..(school name, city, county), hereinafter referred to as “**Beneficiary**”, based in(full address), tel., represented by Mr./Mrs.(last name, first name),

as **PARTIES**.

Given that the Beneficiary has requested MoER support from the School In-Kind Grants (SIG) Program carried out under the Education Quality Improvement Project (EQIP) Project financed by the World Bank (hereinafter “the Bank”) and the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF), through the Loan Agreement (LA), Loan No. IBRD 9536-MD and GCFF TF No. TFOC1762; the Early Learning Partnership Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), through the Grant Agreement (GA) TFOC1507 and the Global Partnership for Education Fund (GPE), through the GA TFOC1484, all dated June 30, 2023, as amended, and ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova by the **Laws No. 222, 223, 224 dated July 31, 2023**, and Laws No. 256/2024, 275/2024 and 273/2024 ratifying Amendment No. 1 to each of the LA, GPE Grant Agreement and ELP Grant Agreement, for implementing the School Subproject entitled (full title).

As a result of the evaluation of the proposals carried out according to the provisions of the School In-Kind Grants Operations Manual (Manual), the MoER has approved a School In-Kind Grant (SIG) for the School Subproject.

The Parties agreed to conclude the current SIG Agreement, as follows:

Art.1. DEFINITIONS

In the context of the current SIG Agreement, the terms, abbreviations and expressions below have the following meanings:

- (i) “**SIG**” – School In-Kind Grant, as defined in the Manual. “**SIG**” represents the goods, services, and/or training received by the Beneficiary from MoER to reach the objectives of the School

Subproject prepared by the Beneficiary and approved under the SIG Program, funded from the GPE Grant;

- (ii) **“PMT”** - MoER Project Management Team; PMT shall provide managerial, fiduciary and technical support for the implementation of the EQIP Project for its full duration;
- (iii) **“MoF”** - Ministry of Finances of the Republic of Moldova;
- (iv) **“School Subproject”** actions are described in the ***Application form***, part of this SIG Agreement, and represents all activities financed within the present SIG Agreement;
- (v) **“The Anti-Corruption Guidelines”** means the *Guidelines On Preventing and Combating Fraud and Corruption in Projects Financed by IBRD Loans and IDA Credits and Grants, dated October 15, 2006 and revised in January 2011, and as of July 1, 2016.*

Art.2. THE OBJECT OF THE SIG AGREEMENT

2.1. The object of the present SIG Agreement is the award of a SIG by MoER to the Beneficiary for the implementation of the School Subproject entitled

prepared by the Beneficiary and approved by MoER.

2.2. The SIG is awarded under the terms and conditions stipulated in the present SIG Agreement, as well as those in the *Manual*.

2.3. The ***SIG Application form***, Annex 1 to the Manual, that includes the School Subproject previously defined (as per Annex 5 to the Manual), is part of the present SIG Agreement.

Art.3. FUNDING

3.1. MoER awards support the Beneficiary as ***SIG*** in the *total amount* of no more than USD, that will be used by the Beneficiary for the implementation of all activities stipulated in the School Subproject, according to the provisions of this SIG Agreement and those of the Manual.

Art. 4. SIG EXPENDITURE ELIGIBILITY

4.1. The SIG allocated under the present SIG Agreement are to be used for the categories of activities, respectively of eligible expenditures set out in the *Manual*.

Art. 5. DURATION AND ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE SIG AGREEMENT

5.1. This SIG Agreement shall enter into force on the date when the last Party signs.

5.2. The Implementation Period of the School Subproject is of _____ months, starting from the date the SIG Agreement enters into force.

5.3 This SIG Agreement and all the obligations of the Parties hereunder expire the day after MoER has sent to the Beneficiary the notification regarding the completion of the SIG, but no later than June 30, 2027.

5.4. Based on a justified request of the Beneficiary, MoER may approve, through an addendum to this SIG Agreement, and the prior written approval of the Bank, the extension for a period

agreed upon by the Parties, but not beyond September 30, 2027, three months before the GPE Grant Closing Date.

Art. 6. RIGHTS OF THE BENEFICIARY

6.1. To receive the SIG under the terms and conditions stipulated in this Agreement and the Manual.

6.2. To receive from MoER the *Manual* to implement the School Subproject (or to download it from the MoER's web page: www.mec.gov.md).

6.3. To request and receive clarifications from MoER / PMT on technical implementation of the School Subproject supported from the SIG Program.

Art. 7. OBLIGATIONS OF THE BENEFICIARY

7.1. To carry out the School Subproject activities as described in the SIG Application form (Annex 1), Results Framework and Monitoring (Annex 3) and School Subproject (Annex 5) attached to this SIG Agreement.

7.2. Indicate in all events, implemented activities and procured goods a clear recognition of the Bank and GPE contribution to the School Subproject.

7.3. To implement the School Subproject with due diligence and efficiency, in accordance with the technical, economic, financial, managerial, environmental and social standards and practices satisfactory to the Bank, as defined in the LA, the GPE Grant Agreement, the *Project Operations Manual*, *Manual*, and in compliance with the provisions of the *Anti-Corruption Guidelines*, applicable to the SIG beneficiaries, as receivers of the in-kind contributions.

7.4. To safe keep all supporting technical, and reporting documents (School Subproject results, etc.) for at least 5 years after the completion of the School Subproject and as required by the national legislation.

7.5. To provide MoER, PMT and the Bank all required information related to the previously mentioned aspects and duly implement any remedial actions agreed on, ensuring that the accounting records (related to assets to be received from MoER) are available at any time for inspection conducted by the MoER, PMT, Bank representatives and external independent auditors conducted by an external audit firm, contracted by the MoER.

7.6. To apply appropriate procedures and provide all required information to enable the monitoring and evaluation of the School Subproject's progress and impact, achieving its objectives and indicators, in accordance with the *Project Operations Manual*, *Manual* and the *Application form*.

7.7. To submit all reports mentioned under **Art. 11** in the format required by MoER and within the deadlines stipulated in this SIG Agreement and in the *Manual*.

Art. 8. MoER'S/PMT RIGHTS

8.1. To periodically check the implementation stage of the School Subproject and the Beneficiary's compliance with the technical, economic, financial, management, and environmental and social standards, practices and procedures, satisfactory to the Bank in accordance with the *Project Operations Manual*, *Manual*, and the *Anti-Corruption Guidelines*, based on supporting documents provided by the Beneficiary.

8.2. To monitor the Beneficiary's compliance with the agreed reporting procedures and reporting deadlines.

8.3. To request the Beneficiary to submit specific reports, other than the periodic ones, related to the School Subproject's technical progress.

8.4. To require external independent audits or to allow the Bank to use its right to require audits of the Beneficiary's records.

8.5. To inspect or to allow the Bank to use its right to inspect the operations and any relevant records or documents of the Beneficiary, including during post review visits that might include on-site inspections as well.

Art. 9. MoER'S/PMT OBLIGATIONS

9.1. To provide the SIG and to transfer goods (assets) under the terms and conditions stipulated in this Agreement, the Manual, the LA, the GPE Grant Agreement.

9.2. To ensure, via the monitors or directly, the necessary technical assistance for the procurement procedures and reporting within the School Subproject, as well as in what it concerns the implementation activities.

9.3. To make available to the Beneficiary the *Manual* to implement the School Subproject.

9.4. To send to the Beneficiary, at the end of the School Subproject, a notification regarding its completion, no later than 45 days from the receipt of the Final Report sent by the Beneficiary, according to the provisions of the *Manual*.

Art. 10. SIG PROGRAM PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES

10.1. The PMT will procure the goods, consulting services, non-consulting services, and Training, that are to be funded by the SIG, in accordance with approved Procurement Plan and following the procurement provisions of the World Bank Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing Borrowers – Procurement in Investment Project Financing of Goods, Works, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services as defined in the LA, as well as and with the provisions of the Manual.

10.2. The PMT will prepare, based on the activities included in the School Subproject and on the approved budget, The Procurement Plan (PP), including all items to be procured for the entire School Subproject implementation period.

10.3. The Procurement Plan is prepared in the first month after signing the SIG Agreement and is sent for approval to the Bank. After Bank approval, the PP will be uploaded by the PMT in the Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP - is the Bank's online procurement planning and tracking tool to prepare, clear and update the PP and conduct all procurement transactions under the School Subproject) and submitted to the Bank for review and approval.

10.4. The Procurement Plan shall be revised annually or whenever necessary and is subject to Bank approval.

10.5. Procurement will be conducted taking into account the primary goal of the School Subproject and the necessity of flexibility to ensure a rapid implementation of the School Subproject, in order to achieve the established objectives.

10.6. The PMT will only enter procurement contracts with capable, reliable suppliers/providers. The price for the Supplies, Assets and/or services will not exceed the market price for similar Supplies, Assets and/or services.

10.7. During the implementation of the contract and after the completion of implementation period, the PMT will permanently maintain accurate records of the procurements including procurement documents in accordance with the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers (in line with the LA and GA)..

10.8. The PMT will maintain records of supporting documents, according to the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers (in line with the LA and GA). (bills, invoices, receiving documents, etc.) acquired under the SIG Agreement.

10.9. No person affiliated with the PMT will participate in the selection, award or administration of a contract or transaction financed under this Agreement if the person or immediate members / business partners of the person holds a financial interest.

10.10. The Bank can at any given time, directly or through third parties, review/inspect if the rules and procedures are followed. The PMT shall keep and present to the Bank, at request, all documents and recording pertaining to the procurements made by using Bank funds.

10.11. The goods purchased by the PMT with Bank funds shall remain the property of the PMT unless they are not transferred to the Beneficiary. The PMT shall be responsible for the maintenance and good care of the goods while under its responsibility.

Art. 11. REPORTING

11.1. The Beneficiary is required to prepare and submit to the MoER/PMT progress reports on quarterly basis (every 3 months). Progress reports shall contain information as provided by Annex 8 to the Manual, be signed by Beneficiary's authorized persons with qualified advanced electronic signature, and sent by email to SIG Program email: programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md.

11.2. Progress reports shall be submitted within the limits set up by Annex 8. In the case of delay of reports' submission, the Beneficiary should submit a written electronically signed notification to the SIG Program email (programuldegranturi.eqip@mec.gov.md) and explain the reasons for such delay.

11.3. The Beneficiary has the obligation to prepare and submit the **Progress Report** on the technical School Subproject implementation, as set out in the *Manual*. The MoER/PMT validates the Progress report only after verifying the supporting documentation and activities on-site.

11.4. The Beneficiary has the obligation to prepare the **Final Report** within **30 calendar days** after the end of School Subproject implementation, as set out in the *Manual*. It shall be submitted for validation to the MoER/PMT. The report will include the presentation of the final results of the School Subproject, with supporting documents that will also be made available for verification.

11.5. The Beneficiary is also required to submit other reports required by MoER, PMT or the Bank.

11.6. The Beneficiary is ultimately responsible for the overall management/implementation of the School Subproject.

11.7. The Beneficiary Project Team (PT) shall mandatorily include a dedicated School Subproject Manager.

Art. 12. ENVIRONMENTAL PROVISIONS

12.1. The activities of the School Subproject must comply with the provisions of the legislation in force on environmental protection, as well as the Bank Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) prepared by the MoER which can be found on the following link: https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/p179363_esmf_updated_final.pdf.

Art. 13. TRANSPARENCY

13.1. The Beneficiary shall provide to the MoER, PMT and the Bank the available information related to the overall School Subproject implementation, to ensure the transparency of its implementation.

13.2. The Beneficiary will ensure the adequate visibility and promotion of the School Subproject, disclosing the School Subproject's objectives and results (within relevant meetings / conferences / workshops, in brochures, magazines, School Subprojects or beneficiaries' website, other online media etc.).

13.3. In all public communication about the School Subproject, the Beneficiary will notify that the School Subproject is funded under the SIG within the EQIP Project.

Art. 14. FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

14.1. The Beneficiary is obliged to comply with the *Bank Anti-Corruption Guidelines*, and national legislation in force, to avoid, prevent and detect any fraud and corruption practices.

14.2. In case of any fraud and corruption suspicion, the legal representative of the Beneficiary is obliged to inform MoER as soon as possible.

Art. 15. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

15.1. Any disagreement between the two Parties during the School Subproject's implementation period will be solved amicably by the Parties.

15.2. If the disagreement cannot be amicably solved, it will be referred for settlement to the Republic of Moldova competent courts.

Art. 16. FORCE MAJEURE

16.1. According to the law, force majeure implies an event beyond the control of the MoER / the Beneficiary, that does not involve a mistake or negligence on the part of MoER / the Beneficiary and that could not have been foreseen.

16.2. None of the Parties shall be liable for the late performance or non-performance of contractual obligations, if these are the result of a Force Majeure event, including, but not limited to war, revolution, civil turbulences, earthquake, fire, explosion, storm, flood, epidemic, strike, lockouts, seizure or other actions of governmental agencies, embargo or any other circumstances that cannot be controlled by the respective Party.

Art. 17. TERMINATION OF THE SIG AGREEMENT

17.1. MoER reserves its right to unilaterally terminate this SIG Agreement without further formalities and without the intervention of the court, other than a notification informing the Beneficiary, in the following circumstances:

- (i) The Beneficiary fails to comply with the provisions of the SIG Agreement or of the Manual;

- (ii) The Beneficiary fails to submit, in two consecutive quarters, quarterly reports and provides no valid justification to MoER-/PMT;
- (iii) The supporting documentation submitted by the Beneficiary is inaccurate;
- (iv) The Beneficiary fails to comply with the provisions concerning the environment or social impact and/or the provisions of the Bank Anti-corruption Guidelines; and
- (v) The Beneficiary closes or ceases to exist for reasons not related to the SIG implementation.

17.2 MoER reserves its right to verify execution by the Beneficiary of SIG Agreement (including implementation of School Subproject) and the Manual (including compliance with continued eligibility criteria under Section 3.2.2). Should non-compliance be identified, provisions of Section 3.2.2 of the Manual shall be applied (considering SIG Agreement).

Art. 18. FINAL DISPOSITIONS

18.1. For any changes to this Agreement, the Beneficiary will send an electronically signed written request, for approval to MoER/PMT, after consultation and prior approval of the Bank.

18.2. The **Application Form** (Annex 1), **Results Framework and Monitoring** (Annex 3) and School Subproject (Annex 5), approved after evaluation are part of this SIG Agreement, bearing the same legal force.

18.3. In case of a conflict between the provisions of the documents mentioned under article 18.2 and the SIG Agreement, the provisions included in the SIG Agreement shall prevail.

18.. In case of a conflict between the provisions of this SIG Agreement and those on the Manual, the provisions of the Manual shall prevail.

18.5. In case of a conflict between the provisions of this SIG Agreement and those of the LA and the GPE Grant Agreement, the LA and the GPE Grant Agreement shall prevail.

18.6. The SIG Agreement is signed in 2 (two) original copies, bearing the same legal force: one for the Beneficiary and one for MoER.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (MoER)	BENEFICIARY (institution)
Legal representative (name) (signature)	Legal representative (name) (signature)

Annex 8. SIG Program Reporting Framework

School In-Kind Grant Program Reporting Framework

School and PMT reports and other deliverables will include, but not be limited to, the following:

Report No	Deliverable	Periodicity	Content	Deadline	Submitted by:
A	SCHOOL to MoER/PMT				
A1	QPR on School Subproject Implementation	Quarterly (except Q4)	A. Data on the following indicators: 1. Number of textbooks purchased and distributed; 2. Number of teachers trained; 3. Number of children who will directly benefit from the SIG; 4. Number of girls who will directly benefit from the SIG (included in A3 indicator); 5. Number of children with a disability who will directly benefit from the SIG (included in A3 indicator); 6. Number of refugee children who will directly benefit from the SIG (included in A3 indicator); B. Narrative laconic information about implementation progress of School Subproject, issues and issues resolution (lessons learned), proposals and suggestions. C. Other topics of interest related to the School Subproject, SIG Agreement, SIG Program, or EQIP.	The 10th working day after quarter end	Official letter by email (if digitally signed) or mail/courier (if hand signed).
A2	APR on School Subproject Implementation	Annual	Similar to Report A1.	The 15th working day after year end	Official letter by email (if digitally signed) or mail/courier (if hand signed).
A3	Final Report on School Subproject Implementation	Final	Similar to Report A1.	The 20th working day after SIG Agreement term end	Official letter by email (if digitally signed) or mail/courier

Report No	Deliverable	Periodicity	Content	Deadline	Submitted by:
					(if hand signed).
B	MoER/PMT to the BANK				
B1	Project QPR	Quarterly (except Q4)	A. Data on SIG Program indicators as per EQIP Results Framework and Monitoring Indicators: 1. Number of textbooks purchased and distributed; 2. Number of teachers trained; 3. Number of children who will directly benefit from the SIG; 4. Number of girls who will directly benefit from the SIG (included in A3 indicator); 5. Number of children with a disability who will directly benefit from the SIG (included in A3 indicator); 6. Number of refugee children who will directly benefit from the SIG (included in A3 indicator); 7. Number of Schools that has received SIG and implemented School Subprojects under the SIG Program according to executed and closed out SIG Agreements. B. Data on SIG Application pipeline: 1. Number of SIG Applications received (registered) under the Call for Proposals 1 (or 2); 2. Number of SIG Applications reviewed under compliance evaluation (Step I); 3. Number of SIG Applications on standby under compliance evaluation for additional improvement by the Applicant; 4. Number of SIG Applications rejected upon compliance evaluation (lack or insufficient improvement by the Applicant); 5. Number of SIG Applications passed to qualitative evaluation (Step II); 6. Number of SIG Applications reviewed under qualitative evaluation; 7. Number of SIG Applications on standby under qualitative evaluation for additional improvement by the Applicant; 8. Number of SIG Applications rejected upon qualitative evaluation (lack or insufficient improvement by the Applicant); 9. List (and number) of SIG Applications that successfully passed the qualitative evaluation (Step II); 10. List (and number) of selected SIG Applications; 11. List (and number) of SIG Applications under the GRM process; 12. List (and number) of approved SIG Applications (by the Bank and MoER); 13. Number of signed SIG Agreements. C. Narrative laconic information about implementation progress of SIG Program as per Project Implementation Plan, including implementation of SIG by the Schools, issues and issues resolution (lessons learned), information on the communication on the SIG Program, proposals and suggestions.	The 45th working day after quarter end	As per POM

Report No	Deliverable	Periodicity	Content	Deadline	Submitted by:
			D. Narrative laconic information about implementation of SIG Program as per Project PP. E. Narrative laconic information about implementation of SIG Program as per Project Financial Plan. F. Other topics of interest related to the School Subprojects, SIG Agreement, SIG Program, EQIP.		
B2	Project APR	Annual	Similar to Report B1.	The 45th working day after quarter end	As per POM
B3	Project Final Report	Final	Similar to Report B1.	As per POM, if not otherwise agreed with the Bank	As per POM

Annex 9: Template ToR for School In-Kind Grant Officer

EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

TERMS OF REFERENCE SCHOOL IN-KIND GRANT OFFICER

A. BACKGROUND

„Education Quality Improvement” Project (EQIP) is a World Bank (hereinafter “the Bank”) - financed Project to be implemented between June 2023 and December 2029.

The total cost of the Project is USD 59.8million equivalent comprising (i) a non-concessional portion in the amount of EUR36.5 million (USD40 million equivalent), (ii) a concessional portion in the amount of USD10 million under the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) on a non-reimbursable basis (Loan No. IBRD 9536-MD), (iii) a grant in the amount of USD5 million from the Early Learning Partnership Multi-Donor Trust Fund (TF0C1507) and (iv) a grant in the amount of USD4.8 million from the Global Partnership for Education Fund (TF0C1484).

The project development objectives are to: (i) improve the learning environment in Participating Institutions, with an emphasis on supporting Disadvantaged Students; and (ii) strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Research for sector management and refugee response. The Project is organized around four components and its objectives will be achieved through improved teacher practices, a learning recovery program for disadvantaged students, an improved learning environment in targeted schools and preschools, and the development of the institutional capacity to design, implement and evaluate education reforms and refugee response interventions. The proposed Contingent Emergency Response Component under fourth part will support the country’s future response in the event of a natural or manmade disaster or emergency.

The EQIP components are described below:

1. *Component 1* - Improve Quality of Teaching Practices. This component aims to (i) improve the quality of teaching; (ii) develop, pilot, and implement a rapid formative assessment, a Learning Recovery Program, and a supplemental tutoring for Disadvantaged Students; and (iii) develop School Subprojects through the provision of School In-Kind Grants to support in-service teacher professional development opportunities.
2. *Component 2* – Improve the Quality of Learning Environment in Participating Institutions. This component aims to improve the learning environment of Participating Institutions through (i) equipping Participating Institutions with furniture and equipment; (ii) carrying out civil works for the rehabilitation of Participating Institutions and Selected ECEC Facilities; and (iii) construction of three (3) high schools in Priority Areas.
3. *Component 3* – Strengthening the Capacity for Education Sector Management and Refugee Response. This component would support (i) improvement in planning, management, and evaluation of education reforms and (ii) Project Management.
4. *Component 4* – Contingent Emergency Response. This component will provide immediate response to an Eligible Crisis or Emergency, as needed, in case a natural or man-made disaster or emergency arises.

The Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) would be responsible for overall Project implementation, while the National Office for Regional and Local Development (NORLD) would implement activities related to civil works.

B. OBJECTIVE OF THE CONSULTANCY

The main role of the SIG Officer is to support the MoER in managing the implementation of SIG activities under Component 1.3. He/she is responsible for supervising all SIG activities from financial management, procurement, social and environmental perspective in collaboration with the relevant EQIP specialists.

The SIG Officer participates in review and evaluation of SIG proposals, and is responsible for monitoring of School Subprojects implementation and reviewing of progress reports prepared by the beneficiaries of improvement programs. He/she is responsible for day-to-day communication with representatives of MoER – mainly the Preuniversity Department - in charge of implementing SIG activities financed by the Project, as well as with SIG beneficiaries.

C. SPECIFIC TASKS

To achieve the assignment's objectives, the Consultant shall perform the following tasks:

Initiating Phase:

Review and master the following key documents that will guide the SIG program and will be used along the project life cycle:

- Project Appraisal Document;
- GPE Grant Agreement;
- GPE Grant Disbursement Letter;
- Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing (IPF) Borrowers;
- Guidelines on Preventing and Combating Fraud and Corruption in Projects Financed by IBRD Loans and IDA Credits;
- POM;
- SIGOM;
- SIG Grant Agreements;
- Other relevant documents suggested by the Project Executive Director.

Core responsibilities:

- Support the development and amendment of the SIG Operations Manual (Manual) including SIG program call for proposals, application package including application template, proposals assessment grid, communication materials for the SIG program release cycles;
- Prepare the SIG work plan for 2023-2027 for approval by the MoER;
- Prepare the SIG Annual Operational Plan (every year) for approval by the MoER;
- Support the launch of the SIG Program;
- Review grant applications and prepare documents for the MoER's School Subprojects Selection Committee to conduct selection of SIG beneficiaries;
- Manage and update SIG database covering submitted applications, selection process results, progress for approved grants and grants achievements including in line with EQIP results framework requirements;

- Ensure day-to-day management of SIG program implementation, including development plans and timelines, staff communication, documentation and SIG database, training for program beneficiaries, release cycles, M&E and reporting on SIG program implementation;
- Coordinate the development of the SIG Procurement Plan (every year);
- Monitor and document the SIG workflow processes, forms, templates, reports and data to ensure full compliance with internal controls, fiduciary, technical, E&S and legal requirements (jointly with MoER and PMT staff);
- Conduct regular (monthly) sessions with the PMT to review progress;
- Generate reports on progress and achievements of the SIG program for PMT, MoER leadership and the Bank;
- Work with finance to generate reporting required for compliance and audits;
- Ensure accurate and adequate paper and electronic document retention on SIG program;
- Review incoming reports against predicted spend and assess whether the implementation progress is on time and on budget.

Execution and Monitoring Phase:

- SIG Officer with support of PMT will be responsible for fiduciary monitoring with regard to grants implementation: (i) ensuring that formal processes of procurement is functioning according to the National and Bank rules; (ii) check and transfer the RFPs to Project Coordinator and Financial Management Specialist for disbursement of funds under the SIG Program; and (iii) evaluate and send for approval to Project Coordinator the progress and final reports prepared by Schools.
- Supervise and monitor the implementation of the SIG following the Manual;
- Supervise and monitor the implementation of the SIG working plan for 2023-2027;
- Supervise and monitor the implementation of the SIG Annual Operational Plan;
- Supervise and monitor the implementation of the SIG Procurement Plans;
- Keep track the progress of the SIG indicators and report to the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist;
- Participate in technical and operational meetings required by Project Coordinator;
- Participate in meeting with Bank representatives during supervision missions required by the project Coordinator;
- Prepare project reports related to the SIG subcomponent and other activities described in the Manual;
- Ensure that key information is regularly collected and tracked including in line with the EQIP results framework for project to measure the progress towards its development objectives;
- Ensure that records are maintained of all applications, approvals and claims as defined in the Manual;
- Provide support to SIG beneficiaries in preparation of their application forms according the Manual;
- Liaise with the Schools for regular communication on SIG Program (and EQIP) related matters;
- Supervise, in collaboration with other PMT and MoER representatives, the implementation of the approved SIG Operations Manual;
- Support the Project Coordinator in other activities defined in the Manual;
- Respond promptly to requests on SIG program, jointly with PMT;
- Evaluate the operation and performance of the Manual and propose any changes or additions required to ensure attainment of the SIG and EQIP development objectives;

- Ensure continuous learning and improvement of SIG program releases within the implementation timeframe;
- Ensure that all accounting procedures and internal controls related to SIG subcomponent, are adequately documented;

Closing

- Organize and archive all information collected during the Project life cycle according the Project Operational Manual and the Manual relevant to SIG subcomponent;
- Ensure that all consultancy products and services hired under the project are delivered before the closing date of the GPE Grant;
- Ensure that all the SIG indicators are achieved;
- Support the Project Coordinator in organizing a final dissemination event to show the results and impact achieved by the SIG subcomponent; and
- Support the preparation of the surveys of beneficiaries and ICR for the SIG subcomponent of EQIP.

D. DURATION

This is a full-time assignment expected to begin in MONTH/YEAR. The contract will be signed for a period of 12 months. Subject to Consultant's satisfactory performance, the contract may be renewed until the Global Partnership for Education Closing Date on December 31, 2027.

E. CONSULTANT'S REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

The consultant to be hired in accordance with the proposed assignment should prepare monthly reports on all activities performed. The consultant will report directly to EQIP PED.

The MoER and Project team will provide the Consultant with necessary support to complete the assignment: project documents necessary for assignment accomplishment, necessary work conditions, including office space, telephone, fax and other office equipment and supplies.

F. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND BASIS FOR EVALUATION (EVALUATION CRITERIA)

The Consultant should meet the following qualifications:

- University degree in economics, public administration or related field;
- Experience of budget management; and/or grant management; and/or procurement management of minimum 1 year;
- Experience or knowledge of monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches;
- Excellent financial management skills;
- Good knowledge of the education sector of Moldova and their needs with experience in implementing tools and/or programs to support education sector or other relevant sector in Moldova;
- Knowledge of the Bank procurement procedures would be an asset;
- Prior experience of working in the field of grant management and monitoring will be considered an advantage;
- Previous experience of work with the WB or other development partners - supported projects would be an advantage;
- Proven experience of work with national authorities, program/project and grants programs implementation or other relevant fields is an advantage;
- Strong communication and teamwork skills;
- Excellent command of written and spoken Romanian and English languages;

- Computer proficiency (Windows, MS Office, Internet Explorer).

G. CONFIDENTIALLY STATEMENT

All data and information received from MoER for the purpose of this assignment is to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of these Terms of Reference. All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of these Terms of Reference are assigned to MoER. The contents of written materials obtained and used in this assignment may not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed advance written authorization of the MoER.

At Execution and Monitoring, and closing phases the position would be supplemented with an additional SIG Officer. The two SIG officers would have shared responsibilities.

Annex 10: Key responsibilities & qualification requirements for the School Subproject Manager

Key responsibilities and qualification requirements for the School Subproject Manager (SSM)

1. The SSM has the following **key responsibilities**:
 - a) Manage the implementation of School Subproject and coordinate School Subproject activities implementation, including promoting and facilitating communication among staff and stakeholders;
 - b) Serve as the key counterpart for interactions with the MoER/ PMT, including all official requests and exchanges pertaining to the daily management of the School Subproject, preparing for supervision visits, organizing meetings at the MoER/ PMT request, following up on requests and recommendations by MoER/ PMT;
 - c) Elaborate the quarterly planning of the School Subproject implementation, ensuring it is periodically reviewed and, as needed updated;
 - d) Prepare progress and final reports and submit them as provided by the Manual and SIG Agreement;
 - e) Supervise the monitoring of all School Subproject indicators;
 - f) Oversees School Subproject implementation, including contract execution, and protocols of collaboration;
 - g) Supervise the implementation of the Environment and Social Management Framework;
 - h) Updating the MoER/ PMT on all matters related to the monitoring of the School Subproject.
2. The GPM should meet the following **qualification requirements**:
 - a) A university bachelor degree and a master's degree in relevant area (administration, economics, etc.);
 - b) At least two years working experience in project management and planning;
 - c) Fluent in Romanian (both oral and written); English will be an advantage;
 - d) Demonstrated ability to work in teams, communicating with all team members and coaching more junior members of the team;
 - e) Demonstrate strong interpersonal skills and good written and oral communication skills in Romanian;
 - f) High standards of personal integrity and ability to treat all individuals with fairness and respect.
 - g) Experience working with international projects will be an advantage.