

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR GOVERNANCE OFFICIALS

January 2026

GPE CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR GOVERNANCE OFFICIALS

1. PURPOSE AND APPLICATION

The purpose of this Code is to ensure a clear, achievable and relevant standard of ethical conduct for the activities and decision-making of members of the Board of Directors and its Standing Committees, as a good practice that will help protect GPE partners, especially children, and ensure broad public trust and confidence in GPE operations.

This Code should be interpreted to be consistent with other GPE policies. It is not designed to be an all-inclusive rubric for ethical behavior but instead provides a framework that serves to structure understanding and increase awareness. Governance Officials are therefore expected to conduct themselves according to both the language and spirit of this Code. Abiding by this Code does not relieve Governance Officials from abiding by other Codes that they have professionally committed to.

The Code is also designed to help inform the expected behavior of GPE Partner Focal Points and GPE funded delegates during their participation in GPE activities (e.g. GPE branded meetings and events arranged by the Secretariat) and during their interaction with fellow Governance Officials and members of the Secretariat.

While the conduct of staff of the GPE Secretariat is subject to the rules of the World Bank Group including its own Code of Conduct, the behavior and standards expected of the GPE Secretariat is informed by this Code. Any allegations of misconduct against staff of the GPE Secretariat may be reported confidentially to the Ethics and Business Conduct Department. Staff are expected to abide by the Core Values of Impact, Integrity, Respect, Teamwork and Innovation, and Governance Officials are encouraged to uphold such values as well.

For the application of this Code, the GPE Executive Committee will designate an Ethics Officer who will be independent from the GPE Secretariat. The Ethics Officer may be invited to attend the deliberations of the Executive Committee (EXCO) and Board to address any ethical issue.

2. PRINCIPLE

Perhaps even more than in other areas, ethics is fundamental to education. It forms the basis for universal access to education, to inclusive education, and gender equality. It supports the priority given to the most vulnerable, such as the children with disabilities or those living in a region of war and conflict. Sharing knowledge,

developing effectiveness of processes and objectively evaluating outcomes are also all part of the ethics of an organization. In other words, ethical conduct and decision-making are hallmarks of GPE and applies to all those involved in the operations and governance of the partnership. Those involved in the governance of GPE have a greater obligation to embody the partnership's core ethical values; as primary representatives of GPE, they set an example for the rest of the partnership. This obligation applies even more strongly to Board and Committee leadership, who are responsible to sustain high standards of ethical behavior.

3. CORE ETHICAL VALUES AND EXPECTED CONDUCT

a. Integrity

Integrity applies to GPE's decision-making processes. Working with integrity involves demonstrating transparency, impartiality, fairness and truthfulness. In order to demonstrate integrity, all individuals entrusted with GPE resources must act without bias. As part of this responsibility, and in compliance with the [GPE Conflict of Interest Policy](#), Governance Officials are required to:

- Sign the conflict-of-interest form upon nomination as well as inform the GPE Secretariat of any subsequent events that could possibly create a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest.
- Inform the Chair of the meeting or the [Chair of the] Executive Committee, as applicable, in situations where their professionally affiliated organization could be affected financially by GPE governance deliberations or decision-making.
- Inform the Chair of the meeting or the [Chair of the] Executive Committee, as applicable, if GPE governance deliberations or decision-making could directly affect their own personal interests, including those of his or her family members.
- Comply with mitigating actions determined by the Executive Committee (the "EXCO") and/or Board/Committee Chair in response to actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

In addition, in compliance with this Code, Governance officials are expected to:

- Inform the Chair of the Executive Committee (EXCO) or the Ethics Officer if they are involved in a situation that is counter to the expressed values of the Partnership and the provisions of this Code and might expose GPE to reputational risk (e.g. allegations concerning the official or ongoing disciplinary or legal actions regarding any forms of misuse or misconduct), and to consider in the best interests of GPE, the appropriateness of remaining as a Governance official in such circumstances. The Chair of the EXCO may directly inform the

GPE CEO, and Board Chair/Vice Chair, whenever relevant, or ask the Ethics Officer to do so.

- Duly report any incident of ethical misconduct to the Chair of the Executive Committee (EXCO) or the Ethics Officer, where appropriate.
- Act in the best interest of GPE when participating in decision-making processes.
- Not intimidate or exert undue pressure on Secretariat staff or other Governance Officials to influence policy development, or financial, operational or administrative decisions. Staff are expected to inform the GPE CEO of such situations, and Governance Officials shall inform the Chair of the EXCO
- Not abuse one's position with GPE to advance their own personal interests, financial or otherwise, or the personal interests of other individuals. Staff and Governance Officials can report such situations to the GPE Ethics Officer who will, when possible, resolve the issue with the Governance Officials concerned, and will inform the Chair of the EXCO of relevant and significant cases.
- Actively discourage giving or receiving gifts or favors of value exceeding \$50, related to their position with the Board, or receiving through their position with the Board, any hospitality that is not necessary to the performance of Board duties (including duties emanating from Standing Committees). They can contact the Ethics Officer for advice on such matters.

b. Duty of Care

The duty of care represents the obligation for Governance Officials to operate in the best interest of GPE. This requires Governance Officials to perform their responsibilities in a way that is aligned with and serves GPE's mission, objectives, priorities and values. For Board and Committee Members, acting in the best interest of GPE is a critical part of their fiduciary responsibility as stewards of GPE resources, and their accountability over the use of these resources.

While Governance Official's responsibilities to constituencies and their own organizations are to be respected, they are expected to work in the best interests of GPE and to seek advice from the Chair of the EXCO or the Ethics Officer where the constituency requirements are in actual or perceived conflict with the interests of GPE. Governance Officials are expected to act with an understanding that GPE's direction is shaped by incorporating and balancing varying constituency interests. Governance Officials are expected to abstain from taking part in the GPE decision-making process when their obligations to their organizations or constituency, or their own private interests, puts them in direct conflict with the best interest of GPE.

c. *Accountability*

Accountability is taking responsibility for one's conduct and decisions. Governance Officials are expected to demonstrate accountability which requires them to:

- Practice and promote full compliance with restrictions around confidential or sensitive documents or deliberations, in accordance with pertinent GPE policies including those related to misuse of funds.
- Share documents with one's constituency in order to achieve better-informed decision-making, with the exception of documents identified by the Board or the GPE Secretariat as confidential; and
- Embody GPE's values [of inclusiveness, respect and non-discrimination] in all GPE-related settings, including field visits, advocacy events and governance meetings.

d. *Courtesy and Respect*

In interactions with fellow Governance Official and GPE Secretariat staff, Governance Officials also have the responsibility to maintain an enabling environment guided by mutual respect. Governance Officials are expected to:

- Act on the basis of equity and non-discrimination when engaging with organizations and individuals across the Partnership, without any form of harassment.
- Practice and promote respectful deliberations, decision-making and social interaction in all GPE settings.
- Treat fellow Governance Officials and GPE staff with courtesy and respect, without threat, harassment of any kind (including sexual harassment), or physical or verbal abuse, and not exert undue influence on their activities.

e. *Prevention of sexual exploitation, sexual harassment and sexual abuse*

The Global Partnership for Education has zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and Governance Officials of GPE must commit not to engage in such behavior.

For purposes of this code - *sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.*

For purposes of this code - *sexual harassment means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favor, or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly*

a term or condition of an individual's employment, or submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

For the purposes of this code - *sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.* In the interests of avoiding any perception of exploitation, abuse, and to protect the reputation of GPE, Governance Officials, even if fully consensual, should not date, be romantically involved with, or engage in sexual relations with members of the GPE Secretariat.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE

- The Code of Conduct will be publicly available on the GPE Website
- All Governance Officials shall be made aware of the Code of Conduct, it will be incorporated into relevant induction material, and all Governance Officials must sign their commitment to the Code.
- Governance Officials who have questions regarding the interpretation of the Code or how a specific situation relates to the Code may request the advice of the Ethics Officer who shall respond promptly. They may do so by writing to ethics@globalpartnership.org

5. REPORTING POTENTIAL ETHICAL MISCONDUCT

- Participants in GPE activities who suspect, or may be aware of, violations of this Code of Ethical Conduct should bring them to the attention of the GPE Ethics Officer who will inform the Chair of the EXCO of all relevant cases. The Ethics Officer will also inform the CEO and Deputy CEO of any allegation that may entail a reputation risk for GPE. Allegations related to individuals who are no longer Governance Officials shall not be reviewed by the EXCO.
- GPE will not tolerate retaliation against anyone who in good faith raises a concern or reports misconduct. However, knowingly reporting false information is contrary to this Code, and Governance Officials who do so may face consequences as set out in this Code, while Secretariat staff may be subject to disciplinary action per World Bank staff rules.

6. PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING ETHICAL MISCONDUCT

- For instances requiring immediate clarification or action with respect to the code (e.g. concerns raised regarding the behavior of a participant during an ongoing meeting), the Ethics Officer or, in case of unavailability of the Ethics Officer, a member of the GPE Secretariat Management Team present may issue a verbal clarification or instruction to the concerned parties to address the matter. The matter if not resolved satisfactorily may then be referred to the EXCO for formal review.
- For instances involving a formal allegation of ethical misconduct by Governance Officials, including Board/Committee Leadership, the matter will be reviewed and addressed by the Executive Committee, with the support of the Ethics Officer who may call on additional ethics experts with the agreement of the EXCO Chair and the GPE CEO. Should the allegation of misconduct concern a member of the EXCO, including Committee Leadership, the concerned individual will recuse him/herself from the Committee's deliberations and decision on the matter.
- The assessment of potential ethical misconduct will reflect due process and will be conducted on a strictly confidential basis. In particular, whether a case is examined by EXCO and the outcome of the deliberations of EXCO on ethical violations shall not be communicated to individuals who have reported alleged violations. Incidents of ethical misconduct may be reported to local authorities, where appropriate.

7. POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ETHICAL MISCONDUCT

- If a Governance Official takes any action that is not consistent with the principles or the standards of behavior reflected by this Code, GPE has the responsibility to act to address the matter. Remedial actions will be determined on a case-by-case basis, but may include the following:
 - a. **Formal Reprimand.** A reprimand in the form of an official letter to the concerned Governance Official and his/her constituency.
 - b. **Conditional Removal.** Removal from GPE governance operations, at both the Board and Committee level, and/or participation in GPE arranged events until certain conditions are satisfied, which may include addressing the concerned ethical issue.
 - c. **Indefinite Removal.** Permanent removal from Global Partnership for

Education governance operations, at the Board and Committee level, and/or participation in GPE arranged events.

- The remedial action imposed by GPE is recommended by the EXCO, in consultation with the Ethics Officer, to the Board and the Board will vote on the EXCO proposal.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE BOARD

- The EXCO will review the application of the code at least once a year and update the Board on application of the code as and when necessary.