



Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary

Concept Stage

(ESRS Concept Stage)

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BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Region	Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)
OECS Countries	LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN	P179210	
Project Name	OECS- Skills and Innovation Project		
Practice Area (Lead)	Financing Instrument	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Education	Investment Project Financing	6/5/2023	8/25/2023
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)		
St. Lucia, OECS, Grenada	Grenada, Saint Lucia, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)		

Proposed Development Objective

The Project Development Objective is to enhance skills and foster regional harmonization, academic excellence, and innovation in post-secondary education.

Financing (in USD Million)	Amount
Total Project Cost	35.00

B. Is the project being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project [including overview of Country, Sectoral & Institutional Contexts and Relationship to CPF]

The Project would achieve its development objective through the implementation of four components: (i) Strengthening participation of post-secondary institutions in regional networks and innovation activities; (ii) Fostering better skills and regional academic excellence in post-secondary education; (iii) Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC), and (iv) Project Management.



Component 1, Strengthening participation of post-secondary institutions in regional networks and innovation activities, will support regional activities to strengthen the participation of OECS National Colleges and post-secondary TVET institutions in regional networks and innovation activities (such as innovation-led entrepreneurship and open innovation). It will develop regional public goods in the form of common standards for teaching, the assessment of students' learning, and the provision of student services, and it will promote innovation-led partnerships with the private sector. It will be implemented by the OECS Commission, with potential partnership with other regional organizations, such as the CXC and University of West Indies (UWI), and it will benefit participating countries directly, as well as potentially other countries in the OECS region.

Component 2, Fostering better skills and regional academic excellence in post-secondary education, will provide direct support to National Colleges and selected post-secondary TVET institutions in participating countries to implement Regional Enhancement Plans (REPs) and improve teaching and learning for priority skills with the objective of promoting academic excellence and fostering better skills in the OECS region. It will develop state-of-the-art learning environments in these post-secondary institutions that will also benefit students and/or faculty in other institutions in the region through cooperation mechanisms established in this component. The component will be implemented by Project Implementation Units in Saint Lucia and Grenada.

Component 3 is a Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC). Due to OECS's high vulnerability to natural disasters, including those exacerbated by climate change, and its vulnerability to global shocks, as exposed by the current COVID-19 crisis, a CERC will be included in the Project. The CERC is designed as a mechanism for rapid response in the event of an eligible emergency, which can be activated upon request from the Government. This component would not have any initial funding allocation, but in the event of an emergency, uncommitted funds could be reallocated from other components in accordance with an Emergency Action Plan prepared by the Government and the CERC's implementation modalities.

Component 4 will provide technical assistance to support the implementation of project activities.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1. Detailed project location(s) and salient physical characteristics relevant to the E&S assessment [geographic, environmental, social]

The project will be implemented by the OECS Commission, St. Lucia and Grenada. Direct beneficiaries are St. Lucia and Grenada, but activities implemented at the regional level will benefit other OECS countries. The OECS countries are particularly vulnerable to interconnected hazards exacerbated by climate change, such as extreme weather events and disease outbreaks. Climate change projections for the OECS region include higher temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, rises in sea level, and increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters. The Caribbean economy has stagnated over the past 2 years as a result of travel restrictions because of the COVID-19 global pandemic. As a result, investments in public services have fallen short as country budgets shrank causing investments in higher education and digital technology to decrease. This has created a gap in not only access to these types of technologies but also made students and faculty at local universities fall behind as compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world. The OECS spends 0.3% of its GDP on research and development (R&D) vs. 2 to 3% in developed economies. Colleges in the OECS invest limited resources in research and innovation, and the University of the West Indies remains the region's only significant source of academic research.



Learning levels in OECS countries are low, and skills shortages and mismatch are a major obstacle to growth. Fewer than 10 percent of all adults in the Eastern Caribbean have attained higher education, which is low for middle-income countries. There is a considerable post-secondary education gender gap between men and women. Enrollment rates are systematically higher for women compared to men, with the gaps wider than the LAC average. Female share of enrollment varies between 61% in St. Lucia and 70% in Saint Kitts and Nevis (SKN). Disability disaggregated data focused on accessibility and learning curriculum, does not exist.

The contribution of national colleges in the OECS to local development and innovation remains largely untapped and OECS National Colleges need to revamp their digital infrastructure to benefit from EdTech-enabled approaches. Most national colleges in the OECS have outdated laboratories and workshops and they need to improve their academic offer and engage more productively with local and regional actors, including employers. Thus, the proposed project aims to make strategic investments to help bridge this gap and bring higher learning institutions further along in their capacity to provide opportunities to their student body in emerging technologies. Component 1 will focus on regional activities to strengthen participation of post-secondary institutions in regional networks and innovation activities while Component 2 will focus on promoting regional academic excellence in post-secondary education in St Lucia and Grenada.

As the project focuses on improving youth skills proficiency and employability by fostering institutional strengthening and innovation in OECS post-secondary institutions, physical works on the ground will be limited. Under component 2, investments in minor rehabilitation works and acquisition of equipment for the establishment of modern laboratories and workshops in national colleges will take place through regional Improvement Plans (IP) to National Colleges. The establishment of regional innovation centers for academic innovation and specialized research in priority areas where OECS countries have a comparative advantage (e.g., blue economy, agroindustry, clean energy) as part of Component 1 will have positive outcomes.

D. 2. Borrower's Institutional Capacity

The project will be implemented at the regional and national levels. Implementation of regional level activities will be carried out by a new Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within the OECS Commission's Education Development Management Unit (EDMU). The OECS Commission has successfully implemented/is implementing several regional World Bank projects such as the Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (CROP-P159653) closed in 2021, the OECS Regional Health Project (P168539) approved in 2020 and the Caribbean Digital Transformation Project (CARDTP - P171528) approved in 2020. The implementation progress as well as safeguards and ESS ratings has been satisfactory for all projects.

The PIU will be established under the Commission's Education Development Management Unit (EDMU) and will report directly to the EDMU's director. The PIU will include a core team of experts including the Project manager, procurement specialist, financial specialist, social and environmental specialist, and monitoring and evaluation specialist and others as needed by the project. The PIU will capitalize on the current existing capacity at the Commission's Financial and Accounting Unit, Procurement Unit, Environmental Sustainability Unit (with ESF trained staff), and Human and Social Unit.



Though the OECS Commission has some experience on working with the WB’s Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), the PIU staff will be trained on the ESF. The OECS Commission already manage several WB projects and have ESF trained staff. Similar to other WB regional projects, the PIU at the OECS Comission will coordinate closely with the national ministries such as the Ministries of Education of the beneficiary countries, Country Project Management Units, OECS National Colleges, and other relevant regional stakeholders to ensure coordination and smooth project implementation.

At the national level, PIUs will be established in Grenada and St Lucia. To support project preparation, the OECS Commission, and governments of Grenada and St Lucia will be requested to assign staff as Environmental and Social Focal Points for the preparation of the required documentation for project approval. The need for dedicated Environmental and Social specialists as part of the PIUs for Grenada and St Lucia will be assessed during project preparation. Prior to the appointment/designation of the environmental and social specialist(s) across the PIUs is complete, the assigned E&S Focal Points shall continue to provide the necessary support on the environmental and social risk management aspects of the project. All the necessary capacity building measures, including staffing and training, will be further assessed during Project preparation and prior to appraisal and documented in the A-ESRS, and subsequently set forth in the Project’s Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP).

II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

Environmental Risk Rating

Moderate

Environmental risk is classified as Moderate. The project will not undertake any new construction and will finance mainly consultancy and non-consultancy services, goods and operational costs. It will foster regional innovation centers, regional networks, and innovation; modernize laboratories and workshops and digital instruction in selected OECS post-secondary institutions. This will include the procurement of digital technologies such as simulators that use Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality and hardware and software acquisition. Therefore, a potential source of environmental risk may be the generation and disposal of electronic waste (e-waste). In addition, rehabilitation of laboratories in colleges would take place which could include repairs to windows, painting and possibly electrical wiring. The potential environmental, health and safety impacts (e.g., noise, dust, occupational health and safety, hazardous and non-hazardous waste, among others) related to the works would not be significant and likely to be short-term and minor. The potential environmental, health and safety risks; safe operations within the labs and disposal of lab waste; and lack of experience of the Borrower with the ESF contributes to the Moderate Risk. The environmental risk rating will be reviewed periodically throughout project implementation to ensure it continues to accurately reflect the level of risk.

Social Risk Rating

Low

The social risk rating for this project is expected to be LOW. The main social risks identified at this point in the project preparation are associated with: (1) managing expectations of project beneficiaries; (2) making sure there are enough resources to reach a large enough group of beneficiaries; (3) ensuring that the institutional arrangements between the OECS commission and respective country ministries have sufficient staff to carry out consultations and



appropriate monitoring of environmental and social risks; (4) risk of grievances related to non-selection in trainings and skills events, or selection for the competitive grants, not being promptly resolved, which could lead to discredit or disinterest in the initiatives; (5) risk associated with lack of transparency and timely provision of information about initiatives, and scholarships.. The impacts of the project components are largely positive, providing a large beneficiary groups (higher education students and faculty) with additional training, scholarships (criteria for eligibility not yet defined), and other resources. These identified risks are low and manageable through adequate planning and other mitigation measures.

B. Environment and Social Standards (ESSs) that Apply to the Activities Being Considered

B.1. General Assessment

ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Overview of the relevance of the Standard for the Project:

The potential project risks consist of: (1) managing expectations of project beneficiaries; (2) ensuring institutional arrangements are clearly spelled out; (3) reaching enough beneficiaries; (4) the generation of e-waste; (5) occupational health and safety during refurbishment works; (5) lack of transparency and timely provision of information about initiatives, and scholarships and (6) safe operations of and waste management in the laboratories.

To manage the risk of improper disposal of electronic waste (e-waste) and the potential environmental impacts from the refurbishment activities and purchase of lab equipment, an Environmental and Social Management Guidance document, proportionate to the environmental and social risks and impacts, will be prepared during implementation inline with the WB Group General Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Guidelines prior to works starting and purchase of the equipment. The Guidance will include templates to develop environmental and social management plans (ESMPs) and E-waste management plans in case these instruments are required during project implementation.

Environmental and Social Commitment Plan and a draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan including the requirements for a project level Grievance Mechanism will be prepared and disclosed prior to appraisal. Inputs gathered during in-country consultations for each site will be incorporated into the SEP.

Project beneficiaries are regional university staff, faculty and students, and private sector actors. The activities under the components will take into consideration the social inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals such as those with disabilities. Capacity building for teachers, staff, and students will be inclusive and materials made available in languages appropriate to each country context.

The Technical Assistance (TA) activities are not expected to generate environmental and social impacts. The requirements set out in paragraphs 14–18 of ESS1 will be applied to TA activities as relevant and appropriate to the nature of the risks and impacts. The terms of reference (TOR) for the activities and other documents defining the scope and outputs of TA activities will be reviewed by the World Bank so that the advice and other support provided are consistent with ESS 1–10 and duly incorporate relevant requirements of the ESSs.

The proposed project has a Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC) with zero allocation that can be activated to provide rapid access to Bank financing for immediate recovery needs during a crisis or emergency. A



CERC Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will be prepared as per the Bank’s CERC Guidance (Oct. 2017), which will include potential activities that could be financed (positive list), a screening process for the potential activities, monitoring, capacity building measures that may be required, and institutional arrangements in case the CERC is activated. The CERC ESMF will be part of the CERC Manual which will be developed by appraisal and finalized by negotiations.

Areas where “Use of Borrower Framework” is being considered:

None

ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

The main stakeholders are regional higher education staff, faculty, students and private sector actors. The Project’s direct beneficiaries would include current and future students enrolled in participating countries’ post-secondary institutions – these students will benefit from interventions to improve regional academic excellence, networks, and innovation. The Project will also benefit teachers, counselors, and administrators of National Colleges and other post-secondary TVET institutions in participating countries, as well as training agencies, regulatory bodies, and social partners working on TVET as well as firms and employers who will benefit from technology transfer, research, and incubation support resulting from innovation activities financed by the Project. Finally, the Project will benefit post-secondary education in other OECS countries by developing mechanisms – e.g., standards and information systems’ architecture – that can be adopted or implemented by other countries.

In order to mitigate risks related to inclusion the project will complete a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). The draft SEP will outline a) who the key stakeholders are; b) how they are to be engaged; c) how often the engagement will occur throughout the project; d) how feedback will be solicited, recorded and monitored over the project; e) who will be charged/responsible with this engagement; f) timeline for this engagement, and so on. The process of stakeholder engagement will begin during preparation, early consultations will include the disclosure of any identified risks and mitigation measures as well as project benefits with feedback from participants informing the final project design where feasible. The SEP will describe the process for continuing engagement into implementation. The SEP is expected to be updated from time to time as/if necessary. The SEP will also describe the measures that will be used to remove obstacles to participation, and how the views of differently affected groups will be captured. Where applicable, the SEP will include differentiated measures to allow the effective participation of those identified as disadvantaged or vulnerable. Dedicated approaches and an increased level of resources may be needed for communication with such differently affected groups so that they can obtain the information they need regarding the issues that will potentially affect (positively or negatively) them.

The SEP will also include a project level grievance redress mechanism (GRM), which will need to be developed for each country. The OECS Commission has an existing mechanism used for all World Bank projects which will be reviewed during preparation and adapted if needed for this project.

The draft SEP shall be prepared and consulted on prior to project appraisal. The World Bank will review the adequacy of the draft SEP which must be prepared, consulted, disclosed and cleared by appraisal. The final SEP will be ready and disclosed during project implementation.

Public Disclosure



B.2. Specific Risks and Impacts

A brief description of the potential environmental and social risks and impacts relevant to the Project.

ESS2 Labor and Working Conditions

ESS2 is relevant given the potential for hiring a small amount of laborers for different aspects of project implementation including basic repairs and rehabilitation of labs in St. Lucia and Grenada as well as the hiring of personnel for the OECS Commission PIU. It is expected there will be some government civil servants designated as focal points in each respective country working in connection with the project, whether full-time or part-time. Those workers will remain subject to the terms and conditions of their existing public-sector employment agreement or arrangement, unless there has been an effective legal transfer of their employment or engagement to the project. ESS2 will not apply to such government civil servants, except for the provisions of Protecting the Work Force Occupational Health and Safety. The project does not intend to be engaged with primary supplier workers. The project does not intend to include the use of community workers. The WBG team will review the specific HR processes and practices for the project in line with due requirements. This includes some requirements in the contracts for third party employers as well as the process for a grievance mechanism and occupational health and safety practices. In order to mitigate labor-related risks the project will either prepare a Labor Management Plan (LMP) or incorporate labour commitments within the ESCP, the best approach will be discussed with the client during project preparation.

The LMP will include a worker's level GRM and a code of conduct.

ESS3 Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Although the project will not finance new construction activities, some minor rehabilitation activities and acquisition of equipment for the establishment of modern laboratories and workshops in selected colleges will take place. The possible rehabilitation activities could involve repairs of windows, painting, wiring etc. and may generate noise, dust and waste depending upon the exact scope of works. However, these activities are expected to be minor and will occur within the footprint of existing colleges. The E&S Management Guidance document to be developed following WB Group EHS Guidelines will ensure that good construction practices are followed.

Given that the project will finance the procurement of digital technologies such as simulators that use Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality and support the development and implementation of information systems (e.g., software development, hardware and software acquisition), the project may also generate electronic waste (e-waste), which could cause soil and water pollution if not managed and disposed of appropriately. Thus, e-waste management guidelines as part of the E&S Management Guidance document will be prepared during implementation prior to the purchase of any equipment to ensure management and proper disposal of e-waste. The e-waste management guidelines will take into account the the World Bank's Environmental Health and Safety General Guidelines and relevant national regulations. During operation, the standard operational procedure of the laboratories, their waste management procedure and training of the staff and students will be reviewed. Greenhouse gases (GHG) estimation will not be carried out since it will not be significant for the project.



ESS4 Community Health and Safety

ESS4 is relevant as COVID-19 is still a risk in the region , hence, preventive measures shall be taken by the PIU, contractors and consulting firms for Project-related work, in line with applicable national laws and guidance. The Project including the contractors will undertake measures to reduce the contagion to a minimum through the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) as relevant and training on preventive and response measures. These measures will be included in the E&S Management Guidance document for inclusion in the bidding documents and contracts during Project implementation.

The refurbishment works is expected to be small-scale that will not result in significant impacts and risks. Nevertheless, it may generate some levels of dust and noise, and may pose a risk to staff and students as well as workers. Thus, the E&S Guidance Management document will include Occupational Health and Safety measures to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are in place, including signage and access control, dust curtains, and other measures, where appropriate. Safe working conditions within the labs including fire and life safety in the laboratories will be assessed during refurbishment as well as during lab operations. No community level workers are expected for this project.

ESS5 Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

ESS5 is not relevant as only minor physical works within existing buildings will take place, and there will be no land acquisition nor restrictions on use or access to land.

ESS6 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

All project activities will take place within existing footprints, and the project does not involve any greenfield or new construction activities; therefore, potential impacts and risks to biodiversity or natural habitats are not envisaged.

ESS7 Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

ESS7 is currently not relevant. There are no groups/communities in St Lucia and Grenada, or the other countries reached by this project, that meet the four cumulative criteria for consideration as indigenous people set forth in ESS7.

ESS8 Cultural Heritage

ESS8 is not relevant. Since the civil works will be undertaken inside existing public buildings, impacts to tangible and intangible cultural heritage are not anticipated.



ESS9 Financial Intermediaries

Project will not support FIs.

C. Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Projects on International Waterways No

OP 7.60 Projects in Disputed Areas No

III. WORLD BANK ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL DUE DILIGENCE

A. Is a common approach being considered? No

Financing Partners

None

B. Proposed Measures, Actions and Timing (Borrower’s commitments)

Actions to be completed prior to Bank Board Approval:

Actions to be completed prior to Appraisal:

- Develop, consult and disclose the draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)
- Develop and disclose a draft Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)
- CERC ESMF as part of the CERC Manual

Possible issues to be addressed in the Borrower Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP):

- Development of an Environmental and Social Management Guidance document to cover e-waste management guidelines and E&S good construction practices prior to launching of the bidding process for the works and purchase of equipment
- Capacity building of the implementing agencies (PIUs) on environmental and social risk management
- Development of clear institutional arrangements and responsibilities between the OECS Commission and Ministries of Education or other government agency in each respective country.
- Development of commitments for labor which will function as an LMP.
- Updating/Finalization and implementation of the SEP, including project level GRM

C. Timing

Tentative target date for preparing the Appraisal Stage ESRS 15-Feb-2023



IV. CONTACT POINTS

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Borrower/Client/Recipient

Borrower: St. Lucia
Borrower: OECS
Borrower: Grenada

Implementing Agency(ies)

Implementing Agency: Grenada
Implementing Agency: Saint Lucia
Implementing Agency: Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

V. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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VI. APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s): Victoria Levin
Practice Manager (ENR/Social) Maria Gonzalez de Asis Recommended on 13-Dec-2022 at 11:55:38 GMT-05:00
Safeguards Advisor ESSA Angela Nyawira Khaminwa (SAESSA) Cleared on 14-Dec-2022 at 17:04:48 GMT-05:00