



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (Partnership Grants)

AGENCY: Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Education (Department) is issuing a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 2021 for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Partnership Grants, Assistance Listing Number 84.334A. This notice relates to the approved information collection under OMB control number 1840-0821, Application for GEAR UP Partnership Grants.

DATES:

Applications Available: [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: [INSERT DATE 120 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: For the addresses for obtaining and submitting an application, please refer to our Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the *Federal Register* on February 13,

2019 (84 FR 3768) and available at
www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-02-13/pdf/2019-
02206.pdf.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ben Witthoefft, U.S.
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7576. Email: Ben.Witthoefft@ed.gov.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf
(TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay
Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The GEAR UP program is a discretionary
grant program that encourages eligible entities to provide
support, and maintain a commitment, to eligible low-income
students, including students with disabilities, to assist
the students in obtaining a secondary school diploma (or
its recognized equivalent) and to prepare for and succeed
in postsecondary education. Under the GEAR UP program, the
Department awards grants to two types of entities: (1)
States and (2) partnerships consisting of at least one
institution of higher education (IHE) and at least one
local educational agency (LEA).

Background: In this notice, the Department invites
applications for partnership grants only. We will invite

applications for State grants in another notice published in the *Federal Register*. Required services under the GEAR UP program are specified in section 404D(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA) (20 U.S.C. 1070a-24(a)), and permissible services under the GEAR UP program are specified in section 404D(b) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-24(b)). For partnership grantees, activities must include providing financial aid information for postsecondary education, encouraging enrollment in rigorous and challenging coursework in order to reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level, and implementing activities to improve the number of participating students who obtain a secondary school diploma and who complete applications for and enroll in a program of postsecondary education. Activities may also include mentoring; tutoring; supporting dual or concurrent enrollment programs that support participating students in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM); academic and career counseling; financial and economic literacy education; and exposure to college campuses.

Recent data suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has created academic challenges and greatly exacerbated mental health issues among school-aged youth. For example, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports the proportion of emergency room visits related to mental health crises has increased dramatically for young children and adolescents

since the start of the pandemic.¹ Researchers also estimate that COVID-19-related disruptions may put students substantially behind, particularly in topics like mathematics, causing many to reenter school with more variability in their academic skills compared to normal circumstances.²

In addition, the transition to remote learning has introduced academic challenges for all students, particularly students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities. Students living in rural communities face additional challenges to accessing instruction. Across the Nation, there are gaps in access to broadband in rural locations and on Tribal lands. In addition to less access to academic instruction, COVID-19 has impacted the well-being of rural students³ and their likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary education.⁴

Priorities: This notice contains two competitive preference priorities and three invitational priorities. Competitive Preference Priority 1 is from the Secretary's Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs published in the *Federal*

¹ www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6945a3.htm

² www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/05/27/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-achievement-and-what-it-may-mean-for-educators/

³ www.pnas.org/content/118/1/2019378118
www.gse.harvard.edu/news/20/10/harvard-edcast-covid-19s-impact-rural-schools

⁴ <https://thecollegepost.com/covid-rural-student-enrollment/>

Register on March 2, 2018 (83 FR 9096) (Supplemental Priorities). Competitive Preference Priority 2 is from 34 CFR 75.226.

Competitive Preference Priorities: For FY 2021 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, these priorities are competitive preference priorities. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i), we award up to an additional five points to an application depending on how well the application meets the priorities.

These priorities are:

Competitive Preference Priority 1--Fostering Flexible and Affordable Paths to Obtaining Knowledge and Skills (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to provide work-based learning experiences (such as internships, apprenticeships, and fellowships) that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations (as defined in section 3(23) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014).

Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promising Evidence (up to 2 points).

Applications supported by evidence that meets the conditions in the definition of "promising evidence" in 34 CFR 77.1(c).

Note 1: To address the priority, an applicant may submit one study or What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) publication

that it believes supports the implementation of a GEAR UP authorized activity proposed in the application and that meets the promising evidence standard. For Partnership grantees, required GEAR UP services are specified in section 404D(a) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-24(a)), and permissible services are specified in section 404D(b) and (c) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-24(b)).

Non-Federal peer reviewers will evaluate studies cited by the applicants to determine if they meet the requirements for promising evidence, as well as whether they are sufficiently aligned with (relevant to) the proposed activity. Applicants will be awarded one point for each authorized activity supported by a relevant citation that meets the promising evidence standard, for a maximum of two points.

Cited studies may include both those already listed in the Department's WWC Database of Individual Studies (see <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/StudyFindings>) and those that have not yet been reviewed by the WWC. Studies listed in the WWC Database of Individual Studies do not necessarily satisfy any or all of the criteria needed to meet the promising evidence standard. Therefore, it is important that applicants themselves ascertain the suitability of the study for the evidence priority. Any proposed studies must be cited in the section of the application that addresses Competitive Preference Priority 2.

Invitational Priorities: For FY 2021, and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, these priorities are invitational priorities. Under 34 CFR 75.105 (c)(1) we do not give an application that meets these invitational priorities a competitive or absolute preference over other applications.

These priorities are:

Invitational Priority 1--Building Capacity for Remote Learning.

Projects that are designed to address one or both of the following priority areas:

(a) Providing personalized and job-embedded professional learning to build the capacity of GEAR UP educators who serve GEAR UP participants to create remote learning experiences for GEAR UP participants that advance student engagement and learning through effective use of technology (e.g., both live and video conferencing professional learning opportunities, professional learning networks or communities, and coaching).

(b) Providing access to software applications to GEAR UP participants without access to such software applications to meet all GEAR UP students' and GEAR UP educators' remote learning needs, regardless of whether students and educators are inside the school building or in remote learning environments.

Note: The remote learning environment must be accessible to individuals with disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as applicable. The remote learning environment must also provide appropriate remote learning language assistance services to English learners.

For the purposes of this priority, "remote learning" means programming where at least part of the learning occurs away from the physical building in a manner that addresses a learner's education needs. Remote learning may include online, hybrid/blended learning, or non-technology-based learning (e.g., lab kits, project supplies, paper packets).

Invitational Priority 2--Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students' Mental Health and Academic Outcomes.

Projects designed to provide integrated student support services (also known as wrap-around services) for GEAR UP participants to address mental health and academic support needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. An applicant should describe in its application how it will collaborate with any partners to provide resources to support students and communities hit the hardest by COVID-19 and implement evidence-based best practices to address the existing inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. The proposed system of integrated student support services should include services that meet the whole needs of students from

low-income backgrounds, including aid for school supplies, transportation costs as allowable by program regulations, connections to mental health services, mentoring, tutoring, and peer support groups, that help ensure graduation from high school and enrollment in postsecondary education.

Invitational Priority 3--Providing GEAR UP Services to Schools Located in Rural Areas.

Applications that include descriptive plans to provide GEAR UP services and resources in rural communities and schools, including those local educational agencies (LEAs) with a locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43.

Definitions: These definitions are from 34 CFR 77.1(c).

Demonstrates a rationale means a key project component included in the project's logic model is informed by research or evaluation findings that suggest the project component is likely to improve relevant outcomes.

Experimental study means a study that is designed to compare outcomes between two groups of individuals (such as students) that are otherwise equivalent except for their assignment to either a treatment group receiving a project component or a control group that does not. Randomized controlled trials, regression discontinuity design studies, and single-case design studies are the specific types of experimental studies that, depending on their design and implementation (e.g., sample attrition in randomized controlled trials and regression discontinuity design

studies), can meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations as described in the WWC Handbooks:

(i) A randomized controlled trial employs random assignment of, for example, students, teachers, classrooms, or schools to receive the project component being evaluated (the treatment group) or not to receive the project component (the control group).

(ii) A regression discontinuity design study assigns the project component being evaluated using a measured variable (e.g., assigning students reading below a cutoff score to tutoring or developmental education classes) and controls for that variable in the analysis of outcomes.

(iii) A single-case design study uses observations of a single case (e.g., a student eligible for a behavioral intervention) over time in the absence and presence of a controlled treatment manipulation to determine whether the outcome is systematically related to the treatment.

Logic model (also referred to as a theory of action) means a framework that identifies key project components of the proposed project (i.e., the active "ingredients" that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the theoretical and operational relationships among the key project components and relevant outcomes.

Note: In developing logic models, applicants may want to use resources such as the Regional Educational Laboratory

Program's (REL Pacific) Education Logic Model Application, available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/elm.asp>, to help design their logic models. Other sources include: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014025.pdf, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014007.pdf, and https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2015057.pdf.

Project component means an activity, strategy, intervention, process, product, practice, or policy included in a project. Evidence may pertain to an individual project component or to a combination of project components (e.g., training teachers on instructional practices for English learners and follow-on coaching for these teachers).

Promising evidence means that there is evidence of the effectiveness of a key project component in improving a relevant outcome, based on a relevant finding from one of the following:

(i) A practice guide prepared by WWC reporting a "strong evidence base" or "moderate evidence base" for the corresponding practice guide recommendation;

(ii) An intervention report prepared by the WWC reporting a "positive effect" or "potentially positive

effect" on a relevant outcome with no reporting of a "negative effect" or "potentially negative effect" on a relevant outcome; or

(iii) A single study assessed by the Department, as appropriate, that--

(A) Is an experimental study, a quasi-experimental design study, or a well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias (e.g., a study using regression methods to account for differences between a treatment group and a comparison group); and

(B) Includes at least one statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect on a relevant outcome.

Quasi-experimental design study means a study using a design that attempts to approximate an experimental study by identifying a comparison group that is similar to the treatment group in important respects. This type of study, depending on design and implementation (e.g., establishment of baseline equivalence of the groups being compared), can meet WWC standards with reservations, but cannot meet WWC standards without reservations, as described in the WWC Handbooks.

Relevant outcome means the student outcome(s) or other outcome(s) the key project component is designed to improve, consistent with the specific goals of the program.

What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Handbooks (WWC

Handbooks) means the standards and procedures set forth in the WWC Standards Handbook, Versions 4.0 or 4.1, and WWC Procedures Handbook, Versions 4.0 or 4.1, or in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Version 3.0 or Version 2.1 (all incorporated by reference, see § 77.2). Study findings eligible for review under WWC standards can meet WWC standards without reservations, meet WWC standards with reservations, or not meet WWC standards. WWC practice guides and intervention reports include findings from systematic reviews of evidence as described in the WWC Handbooks documentation.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-21--1070a-28.

Note: Projects will be awarded and must be operated in a manner consistent with the nondiscrimination requirements contained in Federal civil rights laws.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The Office of Management and Budget Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3485. (c) The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2

CFR part 3474. (d) The regulations for this program in 34

CFR part 694. (e) The Supplemental Priorities.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 86 apply to IHEs only.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: \$35,617,582.

Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications, we may make additional awards in subsequent years from the list of unfunded applications from this competition.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$100,000 - \$5,000,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$1,200,000.

Maximum Award: We will not fund any application for a partnership grant above the maximum award of \$800 per student for a single budget period of 12 months.

Additionally, no funding will be awarded for increases in years two through seven.

Estimated Number of Awards: 28.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Either 72 months or 84 months.

Note: An applicant that wishes to seek funding for a seventh project year (i.e., for a project period greater than 72 months), in order to provide project services to

GEAR UP students through their first year of attendance at an IHE, must propose to do so in its application.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants: Partnerships consisting of (a) at least one LEA and (b) at least one degree-granting IHE. Partnerships may include not less than two other community organizations or entities, such as businesses, professional organizations, State agencies, institutions or agencies sponsoring programs authorized under the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program authorized in part A, subpart 4, of title IV of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070c et seq.), or other public or private agencies or organizations (20 U.S.C. 1070a-21(c)(2)).

Note: If you are a nonprofit organization, under 34 CFR 75.51, you may demonstrate your nonprofit status by providing: (1) proof that the Internal Revenue Service currently recognizes the applicant as an organization to which contributions are tax deductible under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; (2) a statement from a State taxing body or the State attorney general certifying that the organization is a nonprofit organization operating within the State and that no part of its net earnings may lawfully benefit any private shareholder or individual; (3) a certified copy of the applicant's certificate of incorporation or similar document if it clearly establishes the nonprofit status of

the applicant; or (4) any item described above if that item applies to a State or national parent organization, together with a statement by the State or parent organization that the applicant is a local nonprofit affiliate.

2. a. Cost Sharing or Matching: Section 404C(b)(1) of the HEA requires grantees under this program to provide from State, local, institutional, or private funds, not less than 50 percent of the cost of the program (or one dollar of non-Federal funds for every one dollar of Federal funds awarded), which may be provided in cash or in-kind. The provision also specifies that the match may be accrued over the full duration of the grant award period, except that the grantee must make substantial progress towards meeting the matching requirement in each year of the grant award period. Section 404C(c) of the HEA provides that in-kind contributions may include (1) the amount of the financial assistance obligated under GEAR UP to students from State, local, institutional, or private funds, (2) the amount of tuition, fees, room or board waived or reduced for recipients of financial assistance under GEAR UP, (3) the amount expended on documented, targeted, long-term mentoring and counseling provided by volunteers or paid staff of non-school organizations, including businesses, religious organizations, community groups, postsecondary educational institutions, nonprofit and philanthropic

organizations, and other organizations, and (4) equipment and supplies, cash contributions from non-Federal sources, transportation expenses, in-kind or discounted program services, indirect costs, and facility usage.

Section 404C(b) (2) further provides that the Secretary may approve a partnership's request for a reduced match percentage at the time of application if the partnership demonstrates significant economic hardship that precludes the partnership from meeting the matching requirement, or if the partnership requests that contributions to the scholarship fund be matched on the basis of two non-Federal dollars for every one Federal dollar of GEAR UP funds. GEAR UP program regulations in 34 CFR 694.8(a)-(c) address the content of an applicant's request for such a reduced match, and the maximum percentage match that the Secretary may waive. In addition, the Secretary may approve a reduction in match of up to 70 percent upon request from a partnership that (a) includes three or fewer IHEs as members (b) has a fiscal agent identified in 34 CFR 694.8(d) (1), and (c) serves students in schools and LEAs that meet the poverty criteria identified in 34 CFR 694.8(d) (2) and (3).

Given the importance of matching funds to the long-term success of the project, eligible entities must describe how they will meet the matching requirement and

sources of matching funds, as required by General Application Requirements (b) and (j).

b. Supplement-Not-Supplant: This competition involves supplement, not supplant funding requirements. Under section 404B(e) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-22(e)), grant funds awarded under this program must be used to supplement, and not supplant, other Federal, State, and local funds that would otherwise be expended to carry out activities assisted under this program.

c. Indirect Cost Rate Information: For projects that designate an LEA as the fiscal agent, the GEAR UP program regulations at 34 CFR 694.11 limit indirect cost reimbursement to the rate determined in the LEA's negotiated indirect cost rate agreement or eight percent of a modified total direct cost base, whichever amount is less. For projects that designate an IHE as the fiscal agent, the GEAR UP program uses a training indirect cost rate. This rate limits indirect cost reimbursement to an entity's actual indirect costs, as determined in its negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or eight percent of a modified total direct cost base, whichever amount is less. For more information regarding training indirect cost rates, see 34 CFR 75.562. For more information regarding indirect costs, or to obtain a negotiated indirect cost rate, please see www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/intro.html.

d. Administrative Cost Limitation: This program does not include any program-specific limitation on administrative expenses. All administrative expenses must be reasonable and necessary and conform to Cost Principles described in 2 CFR part 200 subpart E of the Uniform Guidance.

3. Subgrantees: A grantee under this competition may not award subgrants to entities to directly carry out project activities described in its application.

4. Other: General Application Requirements: All applicants must meet the following application requirements in order to be considered for funding. The application requirements are from section 404C(a) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-23(a)).

In order for an eligible entity to qualify for a grant under the GEAR UP program, the eligible entity must submit to the Secretary an application for carrying out a GEAR UP program that--

(a) Describes the activities for which assistance under this program is sought, including how the eligible entity will carry out the required activities described in section 404D(a) of the HEA;

(b) Describes, in the case of an eligible entity described in section 404A(c)(2) of the HEA that chooses to provide scholarships, or an eligible entity described in

section 404A(c) (1) of the HEA, how the eligible entity will meet the requirements of section 404E of the HEA;

(c) Describes, in the case of an eligible entity described in section 404A(c) (2) of the HEA that requests a reduced match percentage under subsection (b) (2), how such reduction will assist the entity to provide the scholarships described in subsection (b) (2) (A) (ii);

(d) Provides assurances that adequate administrative and support staff will be responsible for coordinating the activities described in section 404D of the HEA;

(e) Provides assurances that activities assisted under this program will not displace an employee or eliminate a position at a school assisted under this program, including a partial displacement such as a reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits;

(f) Describes, in the case of an eligible entity described in section 404A(c) (1) of the HEA that chooses to use a cohort approach, or an eligible entity described in section 404A(c) (2) of the HEA, how the eligible entity will define the cohorts of the students served by the eligible entity pursuant to section 404B(d) of the HEA, and how the eligible entity will serve the cohorts through grade 12, including--

(i) How vacancies in the program under this program will be filled; and

(ii) How the eligible entity will serve students attending different secondary schools;

(g) Describes how the eligible entity will coordinate programs under this program with other existing Federal, State, or local programs to avoid duplication and maximize the number of students served;

(h) Provides such additional assurances as the Secretary determines necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of this program;

(i) Provides information about the activities that will be carried out by the eligible entity to support systemic changes from which future cohorts of students will benefit; and

(j) Describes the sources of matching funds that will enable the eligible entity to meet the matching requirement described in subsection (b).

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Application Submission Instructions: Applicants are required to follow the Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the *Federal Register* on February 13, 2019 (84 FR 3768) and available at www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-02-13/pdf/2019-02206.pdf, which contain requirements and information on how to submit an application.

2. Intergovernmental Review: This program is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. Information about Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs under Executive Order 12372 is in the application package for this program.

3. Funding Restrictions: We reference regulations outlining funding restrictions in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

4. Content and Form of Application Submission: You must include your complete response to the selection criteria and the competitive preference priorities in the application narrative. Other requirements concerning the content of an application, together with the forms you must submit, are in the application package for this program.

5. Recommended Page Limit: The application narrative is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. We recommend that you (1) limit the application narrative to no more than 65 pages and (2) use the following standards:

- A "page" is 8.5" x 11", on one side only, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.
- Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all the text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, captions, as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs.

- Use a font that is either 12 point or larger or no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch).
- Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial.

The recommended page limit does not apply to the cover sheet; the budget section, including the narrative budget justification; the assurances and certifications or the one-page abstract. However, the recommended page limit does apply to all of the application narrative.

We recommend that any application addressing the competitive preference priorities and invitational priorities include no more than three additional pages for each priority addressed. Applications that do not follow the page limit and formatting recommendations will not be penalized.

V. Application Review Information

1. Selection Criteria: The selection criteria for this competition are from 34 CFR 75.210 and section 404D(a) of the HEA.

a. Need for project (15 points).

(i) The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(A) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project (up to 8 points); and

(B) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses (up to 7 points).

b. Quality of the project design (25 points).

(i) The Secretary considers the quality of the project design of the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of project design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(A) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable (up to 10 points);

(B) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in this notice) (up to 15 points).

c. Quality of project services (15 points).

(i) The Secretary considers the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of project services provided by the proposed project, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color,

national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 5 points).

(iii) In addition, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The extent to which the project services are likely to provide comprehensive mentoring, outreach, and supportive services to students, including the following activities: information regarding financial aid for postsecondary education to participating students, encouraging student enrollment in rigorous and challenging curricula and coursework in order to reduce the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level, and improving the number of participating students who obtain a secondary school diploma and complete applications for and enroll in a program of postsecondary education (up to 5 points); and

(B) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services (up to 5 points).

d. Quality of project personnel (10 points).

(i) The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are

members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability (up to 2 points).

(iii) In addition, the Secretary considers:

(A) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator (up to 4 points); and

(B) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 4 points).

e. Quality of the management plan (10 points).

(i) The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(A) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (up to 4 points);

(B) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project (up to 2 points);

(C) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project (up to 2 points); and

(D) How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate (up to 2 points).

f. Quality of the project evaluation (10 points).

(i) The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of the project evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 4 points);

(B) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes (up to 2 point); and

(C) The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings (up to 2 points); and

(D) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce promising evidence (as

defined in this notice) about the project's effectiveness (up to 2 points).

g. Adequacy of resources (15 points).

(i) The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(A) The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies and other resources from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization and the relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project (up to 5 points);

(B) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits (up to 5 points); and

(C) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support (up to 5 points).

2. Review and Selection Process: We remind potential applicants that in reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.217(d)(3), the past performance of the applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project

objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Secretary may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality.

In addition, in making a competitive grant award, the Secretary requires various assurances including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

For this competition, a panel of non-Federal reviewers will review each application in accordance with the selection criteria in 34 CFR 75.217(d)(3) as required by 20 U.S.C. 1070-a23(d). The individual scores of the reviewers will be added and the sum divided by the number of reviewers to determine the peer review score received in the review process.

If there are insufficient funds for all applications with the same total scores, to the extent practicable the Secretary will consider the distribution of grant awards based on the geographic distribution of such grant awards and the distribution between urban and rural applicants for the GEAR UP program consistent with 20 U.S.C. 1070a-22(a)(3).

3. Risk Assessment and Special Conditions:

Consistent with 2 CFR 200.206, before awarding grants under

this competition the Department conducts a review of the risks posed by applicants. Under 2 CFR 200.208, the Secretary may impose special conditions and, under 2 CFR 3474.10, in appropriate circumstances, high-risk conditions on a grant if the applicant or grantee is not financially stable; has a history of unsatisfactory performance; has a financial or other management system that does not meet the standards in 2 CFR part 200, subpart D; has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant; or is otherwise not responsible.

4. Integrity and Performance System: If you are selected under this competition to receive an award that over the course of the project period may exceed the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000), under 2 CFR 200.206(a)(2) we must make a judgment about your integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards--that is, the risk posed by you as an applicant--before we make an award. In doing so, we must consider any information about you that is in the integrity and performance system (currently referred to as the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)), accessible through the System for Award Management. You may review and comment on any information about yourself that a Federal agency previously entered and that is currently in FAPIIS.

Please note that, if the total value of your currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from the Federal Government exceeds \$10,000,000, the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII, require you to report certain integrity information to FAPIIS semiannually. Please review the requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII, if this grant plus all the other Federal funds you receive exceed \$10,000,000.

5. In General: In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department will review and consider applications for funding pursuant to this notice inviting applications in accordance with--

(a) Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR 200.205);

(b) Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115-232) (2 CFR 200.216);

(c) Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and

materials produced in the United States (2 CFR 200.322);

and

(d) Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR 200.340).

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices: If your application is successful, we notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification (GAN), or we may send you an email containing a link to access an electronic version of your GAN. We may notify you informally, also.

If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we will notify you.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements: We identify administrative and national policy requirements in the application package and reference these and other requirements in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

We reference the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

3. Open Licensing Requirements: Unless an exception applies, if you are awarded a grant under this competition, you will be required to openly license to the public grant deliverables created in whole, or in part, with Department grant funds. When the deliverable consists of modifications to pre-existing works, the license extends only to those modifications that can be separately identified and only to the extent that open licensing is permitted under the terms of any licenses or other legal restrictions on the use of pre-existing works. Additionally, a grantee or subgrantee that is awarded competitive grant funds must have a plan to disseminate these public grant deliverables. This dissemination plan can be developed and submitted after your application has been reviewed and selected for funding. For additional information on the open licensing requirements please refer to 2 CFR 3474.20.

4. Reporting: (a) If you apply for a grant under this competition, you must ensure that you have in place the necessary processes and systems to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 170 should you receive funding under the competition. This does not apply if you have an exception under 2 CFR 170.110(b).

(b) At the end of your project period, you must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive

a multiyear award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR 75.720(c). For specific requirements on reporting, please go to www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html.

(c) Under 34 CFR 75.250(b), the Secretary may provide a grantee with additional funding for data collection analysis and reporting. In this case the Secretary establishes a data collection period.

5. Performance Measures: The performance measures for the GEAR UP Program are established for the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) and used for Department reporting under 34 CFR 75.110. The objectives of the GEAR UP program are (1) to increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of participating students; (2) to increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education of participating students; and (3) to increase educational expectations for participating students and increase student and family knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing.

The effectiveness of this program depends on the rate at which program participants complete high school and enroll in and complete a postsecondary education. Under

GPRA, we developed the following performance measures to track progress toward achieving the program's goals:

1. The percentage of GEAR UP students who pass Algebra 1 or its equivalent by the end of ninth grade.
2. The percentage of GEAR UP students who graduate from high school.
3. The percentage of GEAR UP students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
4. The percentage of GEAR UP students and former GEAR UP students who are enrolled at an IHE.
5. The percentage of current GEAR UP students and former GEAR UP students who enrolled at an IHE and persisted to the second year of postsecondary education at the initial or a subsequent IHE.

In addition, to assess the efficiency of the program, we track the average cost, in Federal funds, of achieving a successful outcome, where success is defined as enrollment in a program of undergraduate instruction at an IHE of GEAR UP students immediately after high school graduation. These performance measures constitute GEAR UP's indicators of the success of the program. Accordingly, we request that applicants include these performance measures in conceptualizing the design, implementation, and evaluation of their proposed projects.

6. Continuation Awards: In making a continuation award under 34 CFR 75.253, the Secretary considers, among

other things: whether a grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the project; whether the grantee has expended funds in a manner that is consistent with its approved application and budget; and, if the Secretary has established performance measurement requirements, the performance targets in the grantee's approved application.

In making a continuation grant, the Secretary also considers whether the grantee is operating in compliance with the assurances in its approved application, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23) as well as all applicable requirements of all other Federal laws, executive orders, regulations, and policies governing this program.

VII. Other Information

Accessible Format: On request to the program contact person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT, individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format. The Department will provide the requestor with an accessible format that may include Rich Text Format (RTF) or text format (txt), a thumb drive, an MP3 file, braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc, or other accessible format.

Electronic Access to This Document: The official version of this document is the document published in the *Federal Register*. You may access the official edition of the *Federal Register* and the Code of Federal Regulations at www.govinfo.gov. At this site you can view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the *Federal Register*, in text or Portal Document Format (PDF). To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at the site.

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Michelle Asha Cooper,
*Acting Assistant Secretary for
Postsecondary Education.*

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