



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (State 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) 2024 for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grants, Assistance Listing Number 84.334S. This notice relates to the approved information collection under OMB control number 1840-0821, Application for GEAR UP State 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 December 7,

2022 (87 FR 75045), and available at
www.federalregister.gov/d/2022-26554.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ben Witthoefft, U.S.
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If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech
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services, please dial 7-1-1.

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 students
from low-income backgrounds, 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 degree-granting institution of
higher education (IHE) and at least one local educational
agency (LEA).

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

applications for Partnership 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) and (c) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-24(b) and (c)). Grantee 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 education level, 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, and providing scholarships as specified in section 404E of the HEA. Activities may also include mentoring; tutoring; supporting dual or concurrent enrollment programs; providing special programs or tutoring in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM); academic and career counseling; financial and economic literacy education; and exposure to college campuses. Additional permissible activities for State grantees are specified in sections 404D(b) and (c) of the HEA.

Priorities: This notice contains four competitive preference priorities. In accordance with 34 CFR

75.105(b) (2) (ii) and (iv), Competitive Preference Priority 1 is from section 404A(b) (3) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-21(b) (3)) and the GEAR UP program regulations (34 CFR 694.19). Competitive Preference Priorities 2 and 3 are from the Secretary's Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the *Federal Register* on December 10, 2021 (86 FR 70612) (Supplemental Priorities). Competitive Preference Priority 4 is from 34 CFR 75.226(d).

Competitive Preference Priorities: For FY 2024 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 15 points to an application, depending on how well the application meets the competitive preference priorities.

These priorities are:

Competitive Preference Priority 1—Successful State GEAR UP grant prior to August 14, 2008 (up to 2 points).

We give priority to an eligible applicant for a State GEAR UP grant that has (a) carried out a successful State GEAR UP grant prior to August 14, 2008, determined on the basis of data (including outcome data) submitted by the applicant as part of its annual and final performance reports, and the applicant's history of compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements; and (b) a

prior demonstrated commitment to early intervention leading to college access through collaboration and replication of successful strategies.

Competitive Preference Priority 2—Increasing Postsecondary Education Access, Affordability, Completion, and Post-Enrollment Success (up to 5 points).

Projects that are designed to increase postsecondary access, affordability, completion, and success for underserved students by establishing a system of high-quality data collection and analysis, such as data on persistence, retention, completion, and post-college outcomes, for transparency, accountability, and institutional improvement.

Competitive Preference Priority 3—Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs (up to 5 Points).

Projects that are designed to improve students' social, emotional, academic, and career development, with a focus on underserved students, through creating education or work-based settings that are supportive, positive, identity-safe and inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status, through developing trusting relationships between students (including underserved students), educators, families, and community partners.

Competitive Preference Priority 4—Moderate Evidence (3 points).

Applications supported by evidence that meets the conditions in the definition of "moderate evidence" (as defined in this notice).

Note: To address this priority, an applicant may submit up to two study citations that it believes support the implementation of a GEAR UP authorized activity proposed in the application and that meet the moderate evidence standard. For State 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) and (c)).

Applicants can cite What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) intervention reports, WWC practice guides, or individual studies, including those already listed in the Department's WWC Database of Individual Studies¹ and those that have not yet been reviewed by the WWC.

The proposed studies must be cited in the application section for Competitive Preference Priority 4 as well as on the Evidence Form. Applicants must also describe: (1) the project component(s) from the cited research they intend to implement in their GEAR UP project, (2) the relevant outcome(s) that are included in both the study (or WWC practice guide or intervention report) and in the proposed project, (3) the research findings suggesting a favorable relationship between the project component and the relevant

¹ <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ReviewedStudies#>

outcome, and (4) how the population and/or settings in the cited research overlap with that of the proposed project. The Department will review the research cited by the applicant to determine whether it meets the requirements for moderate evidence and whether it is sufficiently aligned with the proposed project.

Definitions: The definitions of "demonstrates a rationale," "experimental study," "logic model," "moderate evidence," "project component," "promising evidence," "quasi-experimental design study," "relevant outcome," and "What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Handbooks (WWC Handbooks)" are from 34 CFR 77.1(c). The definitions of "children or students with disabilities," "disconnected youth," "English learner," and "underserved student" are from the Supplemental Priorities.

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>.

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.

Moderate evidence means that there is evidence of effectiveness of a key project component in improving a relevant outcome for a sample that overlaps with the populations or settings proposed to receive that component, based on a relevant finding from one of the following:

(i) A practice guide prepared by the WWC using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, or 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks reporting a "strong evidence base" or "moderate evidence base" for the corresponding practice guide recommendation;

(ii) An intervention report prepared by the WWC using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, or 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks reporting a "positive effect" or "potentially positive

effect" on a relevant outcome based on a "medium to large" extent of evidence, with no reporting of a "negative effect" or "potentially negative effect" on a relevant outcome; or

(iii) A single experimental study or quasi-experimental design study reviewed and reported by the WWC using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, or 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks, or otherwise assessed by the Department using version 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks, as appropriate, and that—

(A) Meets WWC standards with or without reservations;

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

(C) Includes no overriding statistically significant and negative effects on relevant outcomes reported in the study or in a corresponding WWC intervention report prepared under version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, or 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks; and

(D) Is based on a sample from more than one site (*e.g.*, State, county, city, school district, or postsecondary campus) and includes at least 350 students or other individuals across sites. Multiple studies of the same project component that each meet requirements in paragraphs (iii)(A), (B), and (C) of this definition may together satisfy the requirement in this paragraph (iii)(D).

Note: The WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (Version 4.1), as well as the more recent WWC Handbook released in August 2022 (Version 5.0), are available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Handbooks>.

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, 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.

Underserved student means a student in postsecondary education in one or more of the following subgroups:

(a) A student who is living in poverty or is served by schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty.

(b) A student of color.

(c) A student who is a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe.

(d) An English learner.

(e) A child or student with a disability.

(f) A disconnected youth.

(g) A migrant student.

(h) A student experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

(i) A lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, or intersex (LGBTQI+) student.

(j) A student who is in foster care.

(k) A pregnant, parenting, or caregiving student.

(l) A student who is the first in their family to attend postsecondary education.

(m) A student who is enrolled in or is seeking to enroll in postsecondary education who is eligible for a Pell Grant.

For purposes of the definition of *underserved student* only—

Children or students with disabilities means children with disabilities as defined in section 602(3) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1401(3)) and 34 CFR 300.8, or students with disabilities, as defined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 705(37), 705(202) (B));

Disconnected youth means an individual, between the ages 14 and 24, who may be from a low-income background, experiences homelessness, is in foster care, is involved in the justice system, or is not working or not enrolled in (or at risk of dropping out of) an educational institution; and

English learner means an individual who is an English learner as defined in section 8101(20) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, or an individual who is an English language learner as defined in section 203(7) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

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.

Note: The WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (Version 4.1), as well as the more recent WWC Handbook

released in August 2022 (Version 5.0), are available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Handbooks>.

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, 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 (Uniform Guidance), 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.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: The Administration has requested \$408,000,000 for GEAR UP for FY 2024, of which we intend to use an estimated \$40,000,000 for the State competition. The actual level of funding, if any, depends on final congressional action. However, we are inviting

applications to allow enough time to complete the grant process if Congress appropriates funds for this program.

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: \$3,000,000-\$5,000,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$4,000,000.

Maximum Award: We will not make an award for a State grant exceeding \$5,000,000 for a single budget period of 12 months. Additionally, no funding will be awarded for increases in years 2 through 7.

Estimated Number of Awards: 10.

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 institution of higher education (IHE) must propose to do so in its application.

III. Eligibility Information

1. *Eligible Applicants:* States (as defined in section 103(20) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1003(20)), which includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of

Columbia, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Freely Associated States. Per congressional direction in House Report 117-403 2023 (Pub. L. 117-328), only States without an active State GEAR UP grant, or States that have an active State GEAR UP grant that is scheduled to end prior to October 1, 2024, are eligible to receive a new State GEAR UP award in this competition. States with grants remaining open beyond October 1, 2024, for a no-cost extension period or for the sole purpose of data collection and analysis activities are not considered active for purposes of implementing this directive.

2. a. *Cost Sharing or Matching:* Section 404C(b)(1) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-23(b)(1)) 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 toward meeting the matching requirement in each year of the grant award period.

Section 404C(c) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-23(c)) 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.

Grantees must include a budget detailing the source of the matching funds and must provide an outline of the types of matching contributions for at least the first year of the grant in their grant applications. Consistent with 2 CFR 200.306(b), any matching funds must be an allowable use of funds consistent with the GEAR UP program requirements and the Cost Principles described in 2 CFR part 200 subpart E of the Uniform Guidance, and not included as a contribution for any other Federal award.

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 entities eligible to apply to this competition, the program regulations at 34 CFR 694.11 limit indirect cost reimbursement to the rate determined in the entity's negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or 8 percent of a modified total direct cost base, whichever amount is less. 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:* Under 34 CFR 75.708(b) and (c), a grantee under this competition may award subgrants to the following types of entities: Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), State Educational Agencies (SEAs), IHEs, and nonprofit organizations. The grantee may only award subgrants to entities it has identified in an approved application. Under 34 CFR 75.708(d), grantees must ensure that (1) subgrants are awarded on the basis of an approved

budget that is consistent with the grantee's approved application and all applicable Federal statutory, regulatory, and other requirements; (2) every subgrant includes any conditions required by Federal statute and executive orders and their implementing regulations; and (3) subgrantees are aware of requirements imposed upon them by Federal statute and regulation, including the Federal anti-discrimination laws enforced by the Department.

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 sections 404C(a) and 404E of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1070a-23(a); 20 U.S.C. 1070a-25).

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

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

(d) 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;

(e) Describes, in the case of an eligible entity described in section 404A(c)(1) of the HEA that chooses to use a cohort approach, 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 will be filled; and

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

(f) 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;

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

(h) 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;

(i) Describes the sources of matching funds that will enable the eligible entity to meet the matching requirement described in section 404C(b); and

(j) Demonstrates, in the case of an eligible entity that is requesting to use more than 50 percent of grant funds on GEAR UP early intervention activities and less than 50 percent of grant funds on scholarships, that the eligible entity has another means or multiple means of providing scholarships that meet the minimum Pell Grant requirements under 20 U.S.C. 1070a-25(d) to students eligible for a GEAR UP scholarship under 20 U.S.C. 1070a-25(g). A State requesting an exception from the requirement that it spend at least 50 percent of its grant dollars on scholarships must provide, in its application, documentation of the other means of providing scholarships to students eligible for a GEAR UP scholarship under 20 U.S.C. 1070a-25(g), such as a comprehensive list of other sources of aid that reduce or eliminate the need for the grantee to provide GEAR UP scholarships to eligible students out of its Federal funding; the projected number of students that the grantee expects to receive aid through those sources (e.g. based on past cohorts, if applicable);

and, if any, an estimated number of students eligible for a GEAR UP scholarship that are not expected to receive aid through those other sources.

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 December 7, 2022 (87 FR 75045), and available at www.federalregister.gov/d/2022-26554, 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 specify unallowable costs in subpart E of 2 CFR part 200. We reference regulations outlining funding restrictions in the *Applicable Regulations* section of this notice.

Under HEA section 404E(b)(1) (20 U.S.C. 1070a-25(b)(1)), a State must use not less than 25 percent and not more than 50 percent of the grant funds for GEAR UP project activities described in HEA section 404D,² with the

² Excluding the provision of funds for postsecondary scholarships required by HEA section 404D(a)(4).

remainder of grant funds spent on scholarships to eligible GEAR UP students described in HEA section 404E. However, HEA section 404E(b) (2) (20 U.S.C. 1070a-25(b) (2)) permits the Secretary to allow a State to use more than 50 percent of grant funds received under this program for GEAR UP project activities described in HEA section 404D if the State demonstrates that it has another means of providing the students eligible for a GEAR UP scholarship as defined under 20 U.S.C. 1070a-25(g) with the financial assistance described in HEA section 404E and describes such means in the State's application.

4. *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 text in the application narrative, excluding 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 font 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; a scholarship waiver justification; 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 include no more than three additional pages for each priority addressed.

V. Application Review Information

1. *Selection Criteria:* The selection criteria for this competition are from 34 CFR 75.210.

(a) *Need for project.* (up to 10 points)

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

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

(i) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project (up to 4 points);

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure (up to 3 points); and

(iii) The extent to which the proposed project will focus on serving or otherwise addressing the needs of disadvantaged individuals (up to 3 points).

(b) *Quality of the project design.* (up to 30 points)

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

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

(i) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable (up to 8 points);

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in this notice) (up to 7 points);

(iii) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach for meeting statutory purposes and requirements (up to 8 points); and

(iv) 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 7 points).

(c) *Adequacy of resources.* (up to 15 points)

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

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

(i) 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);

(ii) 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

(iii) 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).

(d) *Quality of project personnel.* (up to 20 points)

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

(2) 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 5 points).

(3) In addition, the Secretary considers:

(i) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator (up to 5 points);

(ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 5 points); and

(iii) 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 5 points).

(e) *Quality of the project evaluation.* (up to 25 points)

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

(2) In determining the quality of the project evaluation, the Secretary considers:

(i) 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 10 points);

(ii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes (up to 10 points); and

(iii) 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 5 points).

Note: For purposes of the quality of the project evaluation, selection factor (iii), applicants can propose to evaluate a specific project component to build promising evidence of effectiveness about that strategy.

Importantly, the project component that is the focus of evaluation selection factor (iii) does not need to be the same component for which evidence is provided in Competitive Preference Priority 4 or in the project design selection criteria.

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).

As required by 20 U.S.C. 1070a-23(d), a panel of non-Federal reviewers will review each application for this competition in accordance with the procedures described in 34 CFR 75.217. 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, the Secretary will select among tied applications according to the following procedures. The first tiebreaker criterion will be to select for funding the tied applicant(s) representing the State(s) that has gone longest since being funded under the GEAR UP State program. If still tied, the second tiebreaker will be to fund, from the States still tied after implementing the first tiebreaker, the States with the highest percentage of individuals living in poverty based on Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program (SAIPE) data (age range 5-17) or decennial census data, as appropriate.

3. *Risk Assessment and Specific 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 specific 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 Uniform 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 purposes of 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 education 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. 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 require 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, whether the grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the performance targets in the grantee's approved application.

In making a continuation award, 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).

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 Portable Document Format (PDF). To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at the site.

You may also access documents of the Department published in the *Federal Register* by using the article search feature at www.federalregister.gov. Specifically, through the advanced search feature at this site, you can limit your search to documents published by the Department.

Nasser H. Paydar,

Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education.

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