



4000-01-U

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 is issuing a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 2018 for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grants, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 84.334S.

DATES:

Applications Available: June 7, 2018.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: [INSERT DATE 36 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: [INSERT DATE 96 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 12, 2018 (83 FR 6003) and available at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-02-12/pdf/2018-02558.pdf.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karmon Simms-Coates, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 278-54, Washington, DC 20202-6450. Telephone: (202) 453-7917. Email: Karmon.Simms-Coates@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:

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) eligible partnerships.

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 sections 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)). For State 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, 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 provision of scholarships as specified in section 404E of the HEA. 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.

Background:

On March 2, 2018, the Secretary published in the *Federal Register* the Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs (83 FR 9096) (Supplemental Priorities). In order to advance many of these priorities, this notice contains an absolute priority

that encompasses several of the supplemental priorities. Because the absolute priority includes many categories from which an applicant may choose, and because projects occur over a period of many years, we believe applicants have ample opportunity to address these priorities in their projects.

Priorities: This notice contains one absolute priority and one competitive preference priority. The absolute priority has several categories. The absolute priority is from the Supplemental Priorities. This notice also contains one competitive preference priority. In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(ii) and 34 CFR 75.105(b)(iv), the competitive preference priority 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).

Absolute Priority: For FY 2018, and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, this priority is an absolute priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet this priority. Applicants must address at least one priority area in at least three of the following four categories. Addressing additional activities or addressing all four categories will not

increase an applicant's score, but applicants may choose to do so.

The four categories under this priority are:

Category 1: Fostering Flexible and Affordable Paths to Obtaining Knowledge and Skills.

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

(a) Developing or implementing pathways to recognized postsecondary credentials (as defined in section 3(52) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)) focused on career and technical skills that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations (as defined in section 3(23) of WIOA). Students may obtain such credentials through a wide variety of education providers, such as: IHEs eligible for Federal student financial aid programs, nontraditional education providers (e.g., apprenticeship programs or computer coding boot camps), and providers of self-guided learning;

(b) Providing 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 WIOA);

(c) Creating or expanding innovative paths to a recognized postsecondary credential or obtainment of job-

ready skills that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations (as defined in section 3(23) of WIOA), such as through career pathways (as defined in section 3(7) of WIOA). Such credentials may be offered to students through a wide variety of education providers, such as providers eligible for Federal student financial aid programs, nontraditional education providers, and providers of self-guided learning; or

(d) Creating or expanding opportunities for students to obtain recognized postsecondary credentials in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, or computer science (as defined in this notice).

Category 2: Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) Education, With a Particular Focus on Computer Science.

Projects designed to improve student achievement or other educational outcomes in one or more of the following areas: science, technology, engineering, math, or computer science (as defined in this notice). These projects may address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Supporting student mastery of key prerequisites (e.g., Algebra I) to ensure success in all STEM fields, including computer science (as defined in this notice); exposing children or students to building-block

skills (such as critical thinking and problem-solving, gained through hands-on, inquiry-based learning); or supporting the development of proficiency in the use of computer applications necessary to transition from a user of technologies, particularly computer technologies, to a developer of them;

(b) Increasing access to STEM coursework, including computer science (as defined in this notice), and hands-on learning opportunities, such as through expanded course offerings, dual-enrollment, high-quality online coursework, or other innovative delivery mechanisms;

(c) Creating or expanding partnerships between schools, LEAs, State educational agencies, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, or IHEs to give students access to internships, apprenticeships, or other work-based learning experiences in STEM fields, including computer science (as defined in this notice);

(d) Other evidence-based (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1 and in this notice) and innovative approaches to expanding access to high-quality STEM education, including computer science (as defined in this notice); or

(e) Utilizing technology for educational purposes in communities served by rural local educational agencies (as

defined in this notice) or other areas identified as lacking sufficient access to such tools and resources.

Category 3: Protecting Freedom of Speech and Encouraging Respectful Interactions in a Safe Educational Environment, or Fostering Knowledge and Promoting the Development of Skills that Prepare Students to be Informed, Thoughtful, and Productive Individuals and Citizens.

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

(a) Protecting free speech in order to allow for the discussion of diverse ideas or viewpoints; or

(b) Fostering knowledge of the common rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and civic participation, such as through civics education consistent with section 203(12) of WIOA.

Category 4: Fostering Knowledge and Promoting the Development of Skills that Prepare Students to be Informed, Thoughtful, and Productive Individuals and Citizens.

Projects that are designed to address supporting instruction in personal financial literacy, knowledge of markets and economics, knowledge of higher education financing and repayment (e.g., college savings and student loans), or other skills aimed at building personal financial understanding and responsibility.

Competitive Preference Priority: For FY 2018, and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, this priority is a competitive preference priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i), we award up to an additional two points, depending on how well the application meets this priority.

This priority is:

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 from prior GEAR UP State grants administered by the applicant 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.

Definitions: These definitions are from the Supplemental Priorities and 34 CFR 77.1(c).

Computer Science means the study of computers and algorithmic processes and includes the study of computing principles and theories, computational thinking, computer

hardware, software design, coding, analytics, and computer applications.

Computer science often includes computer programming or coding as a tool to create software, including applications, games, websites, and tools to manage or manipulate data; or development and management of computer hardware and the other electronics related to sharing, securing, and using digital information.

In addition to coding, the expanding field of computer science emphasizes computational thinking and interdisciplinary problem-solving to equip students with the skills and abilities necessary to apply computation in our digital world.

Computer science does not include using a computer for everyday activities, such as browsing the internet; use of tools like word processing, spreadsheets, or presentation software; or using computers in the study and exploration of unrelated subjects.

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.

Evidence-based means the proposed project component is supported by one or more of strong evidence, moderate

evidence, promising evidence, or evidence that demonstrates a rationale.

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 Handbook:

(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.

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 or 3.0 of the WWC Handbook 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 or 3.0 of the WWC Handbook 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 or 3.0 of the WWC Handbook, or otherwise assessed by the Department using version 3.0 of the WWC Handbook, 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 or 3.0 of the WWC Handbook; 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 this requirement.

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 Handbook.

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.

Rural local educational agency means a local educational agency that is eligible under the Small Rural School Achievement (SRSA) program or the Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) program authorized under Title V, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended. Eligible applicants may determine whether a

particular district is eligible for these programs by referring to information on the Department's website at www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/reap.html.

Strong evidence means that there is evidence of the effectiveness of a key project component in improving a relevant outcome for a sample that overlaps with the populations and 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 or 3.0 of the WWC Handbook reporting a "strong evidence base" for the corresponding practice guide recommendation;

(ii) An intervention report prepared by the WWC using version 2.1 or 3.0 of the WWC Handbook reporting a "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 reviewed and reported by the WWC using version 2.1 or 3.0 of the WWC Handbook, or otherwise assessed by the Department using version 3.0 of the WWC Handbook, as appropriate, and that--

(A) Meets WWC standards 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 or 3.0 of the WWC Handbook; 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 this requirement.

What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (WWC Handbook) means the standards and procedures set forth in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Version 3.0 or Version 2.1 (incorporated by reference, see 34 CFR 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 Handbook documentation.

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

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, 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.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 provided \$350,000,000 for the GEAR UP program for FY 2018, of which we intend to use an estimated \$129,666,000 for new GEAR UP awards. The estimated funding available for the new GEAR UP State awards is \$54,833,000.

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: \$2,500,000-\$3,500,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$3,000,000.

Maximum Award: We will not fund any application for a State grant above the maximum award of \$3,500,000 for a single budget period of 12 months. Applications that request more than the maximum amount, except in the case of minimal technical or rounding errors, may be penalized. Additionally, no funding will be awarded for increases in budget after the first 12-month budget period. As described in 34 CFR 694.1, the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the *Federal Register*.

Estimated Number of Awards: 18.

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 of 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 the application provided in response to this notice.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants: States as defined by section 103(21) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1003(21)), which includes in addition to the several States of the United States, 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 the Explanatory Statement to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141), States may only administer one active State GEAR UP grant at a time. Therefore, 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, 2018, are eligible to receive a new State GEAR UP award in this competition.

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.

b. Supplement-Not-Supplant: This program 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.

3. 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 shall 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).

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

5. Other: Under Section 404E(b)(1) of the HEA (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 activities targeted at the school and LEA level as described in section 404D (20 U.S.C. 1070a-24) (excluding the provision of funds for postsecondary scholarships required by section 404D(a)(4) and with the remainder of grant funds spent on postsecondary scholarships to eligible GEAR UP students as described in section 404E). However, section 404E(b)(2) of the HEA permits the Secretary to allow a State to use more than 50 percent of grant funds

received under this program for activities targeted at the LEA level if the State demonstrates in its grant application that it has another means of providing the students with the financial assistance described in HEA section 404E.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Application Submission Instructions: For information on how to submit an application, please refer to our Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the *Federal Register* on February 12, 2018 (83 FR 6003) and available at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg.FR-2018-02-12/pdf/2018-02558.pdf.

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, absolute priorities and competitive preference

priority 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 and Format: The application narrative is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to assess your application. There is no page limit for the application narrative; however, we recommend that you present your information clearly and concisely.

Note: Applications that do not follow the formatting recommendations will not be penalized.

We recommend the following standards:

- A "page" is 8.5" x 11", on one side only, with 1" margins.
- Double-space all text in the application narrative and single-space titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions.
- Use a 12 point font.
- Use an easily readable font such as Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial.

V. Application Review Information

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

a. Need for the project (15 points).

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

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

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

(ii) 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.

b. Quality of project design (15 points).

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

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

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

(ii) The extent to which the project design reflects up-to-date research and the replication of effective practices; and

(iii) The extent to which the project supports systemic changes from which future cohorts of students will benefit.

(3) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c) and in this Notice).

c. Quality of project services (15 points).

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

(2) 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.

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

(i) 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; and

(ii) 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.

d. Quality of project personnel (10 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.

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

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

(ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key personnel.

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

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

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

(i) 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;

(ii) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project;

(iii) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project; 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.

f. Quality of the project evaluation (20 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 the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project;

(ii) 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;

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

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

(v) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce promising evidence (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) about the project's effectiveness.

g. Adequacy of resources (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 the following factors:

(i) The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies and other resources from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization;

(ii) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project;

(iii) 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; and

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

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 of Education (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.

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 200.205, before awarding grants under this competition the Department conducts a review of the risks posed by applicants. Under 2 CFR 3474.10, the Secretary may impose special conditions and, 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 \$150,000),

under 2 CFR 200.205(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.

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. For additional information on the open licensing requirements please refer to 2 CFR 3474.20(c).

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 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 the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (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 Pre-Algebra by the end of 8th grade.

2. The percentage of GEAR UP students who pass Algebra 1 by the end of 9th grade.

3. The percentage of GEAR UP students who take two years of mathematics beyond Algebra 1 by 12th grade.

4. The percentage of GEAR UP students who are on track for graduation at the end of each grade.

5. The percentage of GEAR UP students who are on track to apply for college as measured by completion of the SAT or ACT by the end of 11th grade.

6. The percentage of GEAR UP students who graduate from high school.

7. The percentage of GEAR UP students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

8. The percentage of GEAR UP students and former GEAR UP students who are enrolled at an IHE.

9. The percentage of GEAR UP students who place into college-level math and English without need for remediation.

10. The percentage of current GEAR UP students and former GEAR UP students who are on track to graduate from an IHE one year after enrolling in an 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, and policies governing this program.

VII. Other Information

Accessible Format: Individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) on request to one of the

program contact persons listed under FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION CONTACT.

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 via the Federal Digital System at: www.gpo.gov/fdsys. 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.

Dated: June 4, 2018.

Frank T. Brogan,
*Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and
Delegated the duties of the Assistant
Secretary, Office of Planning, Evaluation
and Policy Development, Delegated the duties
of the Assistant Secretary, Office of
Postsecondary Education.*

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