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**Mark A. Brown,**

*Chief Operating Officer, Federal Student Aid.*  
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BILLING CODE 4000–01–P

## 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) 2021 for the 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:* April 29, 2021.

*Deadline for Transmittal of Applications:* June 28, 2021.

*Deadline for Intergovernmental Review:* August 27, 2021.

**ADDRESSES:** For the addresses for obtaining and submitting an

application, please refer to our Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the **Federal Register** on February 13, 2019 (84 FR 3768) and available at [www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-02-13/pdf/2019-02206.pdf](http://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-02-13/pdf/2019-02206.pdf).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ben Witthoefft, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Room 2C215, Washington, DC 20202–6450. Telephone: (202) 453–7576. Email: [Ben.Witthoefft@ed.gov](mailto:Ben.Witthoefft@ed.gov).

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

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Full Text of Announcement

##### I. Funding Opportunity Description

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

*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 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. Additional permissible activities for State grantees are specified in sections 404D(b) and (c) of the HEA.

Recent data suggest that the COVID–19 pandemic has created academic challenges and greatly exacerbated mental health issues among school-aged youth. For example, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports the proportion of emergency room visits related to mental health crises has increased dramatically for young children and adolescents since the start of the pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Researchers also estimate that COVID–19-related disruptions may put students substantially behind, particularly in topics like mathematics, causing many to reenter school with more variability in their academic skills compared to normal circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the transition to remote learning has introduced academic challenges for all students, particularly students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities. Students living in rural communities face additional challenges to accessing instruction. Across the Nation, there are gaps in access to broadband in rural locations and on Tribal lands. In addition to less access to academic instruction, COVID–19 has impacted the well-being of rural students<sup>3</sup> and their likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary education.<sup>4</sup>

*Priorities:* This notice contains two competitive preference priorities and three invitational 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 Priority 2 is from 34 CFR 75.226(d).

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

These priorities are:

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

<sup>1</sup> [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6945a3.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6945a3.htm).

<sup>2</sup> [www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/05/27/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-achievement-and-what-it-may-mean-for-educators/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/05/27/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-achievement-and-what-it-may-mean-for-educators/).

<sup>3</sup> [www.pnas.org/content/118/1/2019378118](http://www.pnas.org/content/118/1/2019378118), [www.gse.harvard.edu/news/20/10/harvard-edcast-covid-19s-impact-rural-schools](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/20/10/harvard-edcast-covid-19s-impact-rural-schools).

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

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—Moderate Evidence** (Up to 3 points).

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

**Note:** To address the 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—both those already listed in the Department's WWC Database of Individual Studies<sup>5</sup> and those that have not yet been reviewed by the WWC. Studies listed in the WWC Database of Individual Studies do not necessarily satisfy the criteria needed to meet the moderate evidence standard. Therefore, applicants should themselves ascertain the suitability of the study for the evidence priority.

The proposed studies must be cited in the section of the application that addresses Competitive Preference Priority 2 as well as on the Evidence Form. Applicants should 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 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 if it

meets the requirements for moderate evidence, as well as whether it is sufficiently aligned with the project proposed.

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

These priorities are:

**Invitational Priority 1—Building Capacity for Remote Learning.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Projects designed to provide integrated student support services (also known as wrap-around services) for GEAR UP participants to address mental health and academic support needs due

to the COVID-19 pandemic. An applicant should describe in its application how it will collaborate with any partners to provide resources to support students and communities hit the hardest by COVID-19 and implement evidence-based best practices to address the existing inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. The proposed system of integrated student support services should include services that meet the whole needs of students from low-income backgrounds, including aid for school supplies, transportation costs as allowable by program regulations, connections to mental health services, mentoring, tutoring, and peer support groups, that help ensure graduation from high school and enrollment in postsecondary education.

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

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

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

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

**Experimental study** means a study that is designed to compare outcomes between two groups of individuals (such as students) that are otherwise equivalent except for their assignment to either a treatment group receiving a project component or a control group that does not. Randomized controlled trials, regression discontinuity design studies, and single-case design studies are the specific types of experimental studies that, depending on their design and implementation (e.g., sample attrition in randomized controlled trials and regression discontinuity design studies), can meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations as described in the WWC Handbooks:

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

(ii) A regression discontinuity design study assigns the project component being evaluated using a measured variable (e.g., assigning students reading below a cutoff score to tutoring or

<sup>5</sup> <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ReviewedStudies#/OnlyStudiesWithPositiveEffects:false.SetNumber:1>.

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.

*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).

*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).

*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 a program.

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

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

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

*Applicable Regulations:* (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 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:*

\$35,617,582.

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

*Estimated Range of Awards:*

\$2,500,000–\$5,000,000.

*Estimated Average Size of Awards:*

\$3,535,000.

*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 two through seven.

*Estimated Number of Awards:* 11.

**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 116–450 and reinforced in the Explanatory Statement to the Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 116–260), 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, 2021, are eligible to receive a new State GEAR UP award in this competition. States with grants remaining open beyond October 1, 2021, 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 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.

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 detailed in subpart E of 2 CFR part 200, and not included as a contribution for any other Federal award.

**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.

**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 eight 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](http://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. 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 under this 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 of providing the students with GEAR UP scholarships. Such means must ensure that (1) any student that qualifies as a student eligible for a GEAR UP scholarship under 20 U.S.C. 1070a-25(g) will receive a scholarship that meets the minimum Pell Grant requirements under 20 U.S.C. 1070a-25(d), and (2) the eligible entity will not impose additional eligibility criteria that would have the effect of limiting or denying a scholarship to an eligible student as required by 34 CFR 694.14(c)(3).

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

#### IV. Application and Submission Information

##### 1. Application Submission

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

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

**3. Funding Restrictions:** We 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), 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,<sup>6</sup> with the remainder of grant funds spent on

<sup>6</sup> Excluding the provision of funds for postsecondary scholarships required by HEA section 404D(a)(4).

scholarships to eligible GEAR UP students described in HEA section 404E. However, HEA section 404E(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 eligible GEAR UP students 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, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, captions as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs.
- Use a font that is either 12-point 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 or the one-page abstract. However, the recommended page limit does apply to all of the application narrative.

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

## V. Application Review Information

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

### a. *Need for project (15 points).*

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

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

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

(B) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services,

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

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

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

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

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

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

### c. *Quality of project services (15 points).*

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

(ii) In determining the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 5 points).

(iii) In addition, the Secretary considers:

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

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

### d. *Quality of project personnel (10 points).*

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

(ii) In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary

considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 2 points).

(iii) In addition, the Secretary considers:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(B) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic

assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes (up to 4 points); and

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

g. *Adequacy of resources (15 points).*

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

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

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

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

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

2. *Review and Selection Process:* We remind potential applicants that in reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.217(d)(3), the past performance of the applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Secretary may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality.

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

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

If there are insufficient funds for all applications with the same total scores, the Secretary will, to the extent

practicable, 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 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 Award Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIS)), 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 FAPIS.

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 FAPIS semiannually. Please review the requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII, if this grant plus all the other Federal funds you receive exceed \$10,000,000.

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

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

(b) Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. 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](http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html).

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

5. *Performance Measures:* The performance measures for the GEAR UP Program are established for the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA). These measures are also used for Department reporting under 34 CFR 75.110. The objectives of the GEAR UP program are (1) to increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of participating students; (2) to increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education of participating students; and (3) to increase 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. Under GPRA, we developed the following performance measures to track progress toward achieving the program's goals:

1. The percentage of GEAR UP students who pass Algebra 1 or its equivalent by the end of ninth grade.
2. The percentage of GEAR UP students who graduate from high school.

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

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

5. The percentage of current GEAR UP students and former GEAR UP students who enrolled at an IHE and persisted to the second year of postsecondary education at the initial or a subsequent IHE.

In addition, to assess the efficiency of the program, we track the average cost, in Federal funds, of achieving a successful outcome, where success is defined as enrollment in a program of undergraduate instruction at an IHE of GEAR UP students immediately after high school graduation. These performance measures constitute GEAR UP's indicators of the success of the program. Accordingly, we 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, 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).

## 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, audiotope, 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](http://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](http://www.federalregister.gov). Specifically, through the advanced search feature at this site, you can limit your search to documents published by the Department.

**Michelle Asha Cooper,**

*Acting Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education.*

[FR Doc. 2021-08980 Filed 4-28-21; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4000-01-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[Docket No.: ED-2021-SCC-0063]

### Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget for Review and Approval; Comment Request; Application for the Business and International Education (BIE) Program (1894-0001)

**AGENCY:** Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), Department of Education (ED).

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, ED is proposing a reinstatement with change of a previously approved collection.

**DATES:** Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before June 1, 2021.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments and recommendations for proposed information collection requests should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to [www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain](http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain). Find this information collection request by selecting "Department of Education" under "Currently Under Review," then check "Only Show ICR for Public Comment" checkbox. Comments may also be sent to [ICDocketmgr@ed.gov](mailto:ICDocketmgr@ed.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For specific questions related to collection activities, please contact Tanyelle Richardson, 202-453-6391.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Department of Education (ED), in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) (44 U.S.C.