



Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)

FY 2025 Grant Competition
Partnership Program (84.334A)
Applicant Resource



The GEAR UP Partnership program provides grants to group applicants to assist students in obtaining a secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent) and to prepare for and succeed in postsecondary education, especially for students from low-income backgrounds, including students with disabilities. In FY 2025, the Department estimates making approximately **29 awards**. The estimated range of awards is **\$200,000 - \$5,000,000** for each annual budget period, for a performance period of **72 or 84 months**.





Overview and Eligibility



Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Partnership Grants

The GEAR UP discretionary grant program is designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. It provides six- or seven-year grants to Partnerships to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools. These competitive programs have an early intervention component designed to increase college attendance and success.

Eligible Entities

Partnership programs consist of (i) one or more local educational agency (LEA) and (ii) one or more degree-granting institutions of higher education (IHE). Additionally, it may include not less than two other community organizations or entities, such as businesses, professional organizations, State agencies, or other public or private agencies or organizations.

The applicant entity must be either an LEA or an IHE.

Note: A Partnership under this competition must follow the procedures under 34 CFR 75.127 – 75.129 in developing a group application. This includes developing an agreement that details the activities that each member of the group plans to perform and binds each member of the group to every statement and assurance made by the applicant in the application. This agreement must be submitted with the application.





Project Elements

Key Project Activities

Coursework:

encourage enrollment in rigorous and challenging coursework in order to reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level



Financial Aid:

provide financial aid information for postsecondary education

Early Intervention

Services: implement activities to improve the number of participating students who obtain a secondary school diploma

Postsecondary

Preparation: implement activities to improve the number of participating students who complete applications for and, enroll in, a program of postsecondary education

Required and Permissible Activities

The GEAR UP program regulations outline which activities all projects must carry out as well as those that they may optionally choose to incorporate:

- Required Activities: [§ 694.21](#)

- Permissible Activities: [§ 694.22](#)

-In addition, Partnership grants may choose to provide scholarships to eligible participants.





Matching Requirement



The GEAR UP statute includes requirements for grantees on matching funds. For full details, see the program regulations in [§ 694.7](#) and [§ 694.8](#), and also refer to the Notice Inviting Applications.



Matching Requirement

Partnerships must provide from State, local, institutional, or private funds at least 50% of the cost of the program, which may be provided in cash or in-kind. That is, \$1 in non-federal funds for every \$1 in federal funds.



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

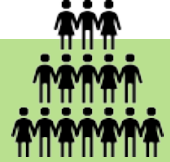


Note: Partnerships may request and be approved for a reduced match percentage at the time of application by demonstrating significant economic hardship. See [§694.8](#) of the GEAR UP program regulations and the Notice Inviting Applications for specific details on requesting a waiver of match requirements.



Implementation Model

 **Partnerships** may only implement a cohort model.






Cohort Model

Under the cohort model, Partnerships provide services to an **entire grade level** of students, with the below parameters:

- ☐ Provide services to at least one grade level of students (e.g., all 7th graders);
- ☐ Begin services no later than 7th grade;
- ☐ Ensure services are provided through the 12th grade to students in the participating grade level;
- ☐ Ensure services are provided through the students' first year of attendance at an institution of higher education (with a seven-year grant award);
- ☐ After the students complete the last grade level at the originating school, the project must continue to provide services to the school that the substantial majority of students attend; and
- ☐ Provide services to students who have received services under a previous GEAR UP grant award but have not yet completed the 12th grade.

Important Notes

-  An applicant implementing a cohort model must comply with the following requirements regarding the originating target school:
 - At least fifty percent of the students enrolled in the school must be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; and
 - Must have a 7th grade class.
-  Programs implementing a cohort model can elect to provide services to an entire grade level of students who reside in public housing.
-  All originating target schools should be included in your application. School eligibility is determined based on the information provided in the application.





Application Components

Selection Criteria



Need for Project: (i) The data presented (including a comparison to local, State, regional, national, or international data) that demonstrates the issue, challenge, or opportunity to be addressed by the proposed project; (ii) The extent to which the proposed project will focus on serving or otherwise addressing the needs of underserved populations; and (iii) The extent to which the specific nature and magnitude of gaps or challenges are identified and the extent to which these gaps or challenges will be addressed by the services, supports, infrastructure, or opportunities described in the proposed project

Up to 10
points



Project Design: (i) the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes are clearly specified and measurable, and ambitious yet achievable within the project period, and aligned with the purposes of the grant program; (ii) the quality of the logic model or other, conceptual framework underlying the proposed project, including how inputs relate to outcomes; (iii) how the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives, including those from underserved populations, are brought to bear in the design, implementation, operation, evaluation, and the improvement of the proposed project including those of parents, educators, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate; and (iv) the likelihood that the proposed project will result in systemic change that supports continuous, sustainable and measurable improvement.

Up to 30
points



Adequacy of Resources: (i) the adequacy of support for the project, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant 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; and (iii) the extent to which the budget is adequate to support the proposed project and the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

Up to 15
points



Project Personnel: (i) the extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has project personnel or a plan for hiring of personnel who are members of groups that have historically encountered barriers, or who have professional or personal experiences with barriers, based on one or more of the following: economic disadvantage; disability; living in a rural location; experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity ; (ii) the extent to which the project director or principal investigator has the qualifications required for the project, including formal training or work experience in fields related to the objectives of the project and experience in designing, managing, or implementing similar projects for the target population to be served by the project; (iii) the extent to which the key personnel in the project, when hired, have the qualifications required for the proposed project, including formal training or work experience in fields related to the objectives of the project, and represent or have lived experiences of the target population; and (iv) 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 20
points



Project Evaluation: (i) the extent to which the methods of evaluation or other evidence-building include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quality data that are quantitative and qualitative; (ii) the extent to which the methods of evaluation or other evidence-building will provide performance feedback and provide formative, diagnostic, or interim data that is a periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes; and (iii) the extent to which the methods of evaluation include an experimental study, a quasi-experimental design study, or a correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias (such as regression methods to account for differences between a treatment group and a comparison group) to assess the effectiveness of the project on relevant outcomes.

Up to 25
points



Application Components



The application includes three **optional** competitive preference priorities.

CPP 1: Increasing Postsecondary Education Access, Affordability, Completion, and Post-Enrollment Success (up to 5 points)

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

CPP 2: Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs (up to 5 points)

Projects that are designed to improve students' social, emotional, academic, and career development, with a focus on underserved students, through fostering partnerships, including across government agencies, local educational agencies, community-based organizations, adult learning providers, and postsecondary education institutions, to provide comprehensive services to students and families that support students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs, and that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status.

CPP 3: Moderate Evidence (3 points)

Applicants supported by evidence that meets the conditions in the definition of "moderate evidence" (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications).

Note: to address the priority, an applicant may submit up to two study citations that it believes supports the implementation of a GEAR UP authorized activity proposed in the application and that meet the moderate evidence standard.





Pre-Application Webinar



Still have questions? The Department is hosting GEAR UP Partnership Pre-Application Webinars with live Q&As. This is a chance to learn more about the program, eligibility, and the application process.

The pre-application technical assistance webinars are scheduled for:

● **Wednesday, December 4th at 1:00pm EST**

and

● **Thursday, December 12th at 1:00pm EST**

**Look for more details and a log-in link for the webinars on
[the GEAR UP program website.](#)**





FAQs & Resources



Common Questions

Does the amount of funds requested in the application need to stay the same for all years of the project?

No, the funding amounts by year may vary based on anticipated needs and number of students. However, the funding amount can never go higher than year one.

Are subgrantees allowable for this program?

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

See **GEAR UP** homepage to review additional Frequently Asked Questions.



Resources & Contact



[Program Website](#)



[Grants.gov](#)

Points of Contact

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