

**Program Administration**

Question	Answer	Date
Can the Grant Coordinator be an existing person in the school district that will oversee GEAR UP or must it be a new hire? Will this be a full-time position?	This will vary by LEA size and the number of students served. The position may be new or be filled by existing staff depending on capacity. Grant funds may pay salary for up to 50% of the portion of the employee’s time that is dedicated to the grant.	7-17-18
For the data collection, is there an existing data collection system or will the LEAs have the flexibility to use their own?	TEA will identify a technical assistance provider to work with districts to collect data from existing district systems. This provider will support districts in collecting and reporting the required data.	7-17-18

**Matching Funds**

Question	Answer	Date
Is the 1:1 match requirement only in cash from State or Local Funding sources or will there be In-Kind costs allowed.	In-kind matching will be allowed.	7-17-18
What specific fund sources can be used for the one to one matching funds?	A wide variety of fund sources may be used and TEA will help grantees identify strategies as needed throughout the grant. Methods for complying with the match requirement are outlined in Section C on page 7 of this document: <a href="https://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/gearup-statute.pdf">https://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/gearup-statute.pdf</a>	7-17-18
Can we count percentages of employee salaries towards matching funds if the employees take on additional duties and responsibilities related to the grant?	Yes, but time and effort documentation and reporting will be required.	7-17-18
During Year 1, do all matching funds need to come from the middle school only?	Matching funds may come from the middle school or high school in Year 1.	7-17-18

**Budget Planning**

Question	Answer	Date
Is the \$350,000 renewed each year (for 7 years) for the life of the grant?	The grant amount (of up to \$350,000) is an annual amount.	7-17-18

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Will smaller districts receive the same \$350,000 as larger schools?	The grant limit is \$350,000. Award amounts will vary but not exceed \$350,000.	7-17-18
Where do we address the budget and how much we are requesting? Will there be a budget application required later?	Grantees will be selected through the Letter of Interest process as outlined in the Request for Letters of Interest. This process does not require budget documentation. Once identified, grantees will work in collaboration with the TEA grants and program departments to complete additional forms, including budget plans.	7-17-18
How will LEAs know how to develop a budget until they know what the TEA contribution will be for services that are mandated? (i.e. professional development costs, near peer advisory pay, travel, etc.)	LEAs are not required to develop budget documents in the Letter of Interest process. Some technical assistance will be covered by TEA. Please refer to Appendix A of the Request for Letters of Interest for more information.	7-17-18
Is there an average cost per student?	Cost per student will vary with programming at the local level. Refer to the Appendix to understand the LEA's financial responsibility with regards to each required activity. The most substantial financial commitment for LEAs is provision of advising at the middle school for primary cohort students and, starting in Year 2, salary expenses for Near Peer Advisors (at least one per 250 students) in the high school.	7-17-18
Are we allowed to use funds to cover cost for dual enrollment courses and TSI costs? Are we allowed to use funds for Technical Certification Courses and Certification Costs.	The grant is intended to drive post-secondary enrollment and completion. In as much as these programs are designed and implemented to drive toward post-secondary enrollment and completion, the costs are allowable.	7-17-18

**Technical Assistance**

Question	Answer	Date
What will be the process and timeline for selecting a Technical Assistance provider?	A Request for Letters of Interest for Technical Assistance grants for IHEs and ESCs will post in the month of July, with selection of one or more partners in August or September. Through this process, TEA will identify grantees for professional development and data management. TEA anticipates launching a competitive process to select Near Peer Advising partners mid-fall of 2018.	7-17-18
Is each district asked to select IHE as a partner?	Districts are asked to form local advisory councils which should include business and higher education partners. Districts are not	7-17-18

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	required to select an IHE for the purpose of Technical Assistance. Technical Assistance providers will be identified by TEA.	
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**Eligibility and Feeder Patterns**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Date</b>
If a district is applying for the current USDE GEAR UP Partnership program or other GEAR UP opportunity, are they still eligible to apply for the state program?	According to federal guidelines, grantees should not aim to serve the same students or provide duplicative services with multiple GEAR UP grants. In short, you could not receive both grants if targeting the same cohorts of students in the same feeder pattern with similar program activities. You are welcome to pursue both grants given the overlapping timeline but, if awarded both, the projects would have to be demonstrably different for you to be able to receive and administer both.	7-17-18
Is a district that was part of a grant ending in Summer of 2018, considered to be part of an active grant? Or since services have ended can we state in our application that the campuses are not part of an active grant?	If the services and funding will not overlap, you can state that you are not part of an active grant.	7-17-18
Are IHEs eligible to apply for the grant?	IHEs are not eligible to apply for this grant opportunity but may consider future opportunities to provide technical assistance to GEAR UP grantees.	7-17-18
The request for a LOI states that priority will be given to districts where the student-to-counselor ratio exceeds 450:1. Does this mean districts that have more than 450 students per counselor or districts that have less than 450 students per counselor?	Priority points are given to those LEAs with high counselor caseloads (e.g. more than 450 students per counselor) and limited supplemental resources for student advising.	7-17-18
Is there any consideration for small, high need rural districts that may not meet the students/counselor (450) ratio?	Yes. This is considered a priority criterion and not an eligibility criterion so TEA can take into account the particular circumstances of a district that does not meet that threshold.	7-17-18
Can we COMBINE several districts/schools that meet the required criteria of, for example, counselor ratio.	The unit of application is a feeder pattern, defined as one or more middle schools feeding into a single high school. If you wish to apply on behalf of multiple feeder patterns, you may do so, but please complete a Letter of Interest for each. Although a high counselor caseload is listed as a priority criterion, it is not required	7-17-18

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	for eligibility. TEA understands that small and rural districts may benefit from these services without a high counselor caseload; please provide context for why the programs proposed would benefit your students in the context of your current resources and programming.	
If submitting a grant application for two high schools (each has its own feeder middle school), do I need to submit two grant applications?	If submitting for two feeder patterns, please submit two Letters of Interest.	7-17-18
Does "promoted" 8th grade students to the high school mean the students must have enrolled or be eligible to enroll in the high school?	70% of students enroll in the high school. Because services are focused and delivered across a feeder pattern, it is important to that a high number of students be retained within the feeder pattern to benefit from services.	7-17-18

**Implementation of Cohort and Priority Models**

If we choose to apply for the grant, we can begin implementation with 7th grade only, correct?	No. Texas GEAR UP will serve Primary Cohort students starting in 7 <sup>th</sup> grade AND priority students throughout the feeder pattern. Some services will begin at the high school before the priority cohort arrives. For example, professional development will begin at the high school in Year 1. In Year 2, Near Peer Advising will launch at the high school.	7-17-18
What does the Priority Model look like during Year 1 if you are starting with a cohort of 7 <sup>th</sup> graders? Does this mean you service a select group of 6 <sup>th</sup> graders starting during year 1 as well? What does “before/after” services mean?	Basic services will launch at the high school before the Primary Cohort arrives. Basic services will continue at the middle school after the Primary Cohort is promoted.	7-17-18
Our District is a PK-8 district at this time. We are in the planning stages of adding a high school starting with a 9th grade class in the 2020-2021 school year. Are we eligible to apply of the GEAR UP grant?	Given that this grant includes a “priority cohort” model that provides high school services starting in 2018-2019, your district would not be able to implement all the required activities, and thus is not eligible.	7-17-18

**Pilot Initiatives**

Question	Answer	Date
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Do we select the Near Peer Advisory Model and Organization or will this be assigned from TEA? How do we address this in the application?	Near Peer Advisor partner(s) will be identified by TEA through a competitive process. TEA will work collaboratively with grantees to identify the model and partner that best suits their needs and context.	7-17-18
Does the salary for the Peer Advisor begin with Year 1?	No. Salary for the Peer Advisor will begin in Year 2.	7-17-18
Will Peer Advisory begin working with High Schools in Year 1	Near Peer Advising services will begin in High Schools in Year 2 of the grant.	7-17-18
Reiterate who is responsible for Near Peer Advisor salaries please	LEAs will be responsible for Near Peer Advisor salaries. These may be covered with grant funds in the early years of the grant and at a decreasing percentage in later years.	7-17-18
Are near peer advisors typically high school or college age? How many hours a week are they employed? Who hires them? Who trains them? Is there a particular curriculum or technical assistance provider that is being considered?	TEA will identify one or more Near Peer Advisor partner organizations who will recruit, train and match advisors. The advisors will most likely be college age or recent college graduates and full-time employees.	7-17-18
What is the salary expectation?	Salary will vary with partner organization and business model but it is expected that the salary expense would not exceed typical first-year district professional employees.	7-17-18
Is the College and Career Exploration course already developed or will the GU project be developing it with input from the GU sites?	The course is not yet developed. The development process will include gathering significant input from GU grantee sites.	7-17-18
What types of technology tools are being considered in this grant?	TEA is exploring tools to drive efficient, effective work of advisors, such as caseload management tools. In addition, TEA is exploring ways in which technology can support career and pathways exploration. TEA is currently considering tools that serve a variety of stakeholders including advisors, school counselors, school and district-level administrators, students and parents.	7-17-18

**Professional Development & Rigor**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Will we be permitted to provide professional development to middle school teachers? Can we incorporate STEM initiatives that will help to increase rigor for students?	Yes. The PD outlined in the scheduled activities shows what is required at a minimum. Grantees may use their grant funds to expand on related activities that drive the project objectives. These will vary based on what is currently available at the LEA	7-17-18

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	and what the LEA and Technical Assistance provider agree upon during the needs assessment.	
What does Increase timely participation in Algebra 1 mean?	The grant requires schools to facilitate an increase in Algebra I participation in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade.	7-17-18
Is the LEA able to design the professional development or will it come from TEA?	PD will be designed by a required technical assistance provider based on a needs assessment conducted by the provider with grantees.	7-17-18
If the emphasis is on Algebra I and math, can we also focus on the other core content areas?	Activity 1.5 in this strategy focuses on Algebra I but the remaining activities can focus may be focused on any core content area identified as an opportunity to increase rigor.	7-17-18

**Letter of Interest Forms and Timeline**

The application lists an 8-page limit. does that include the questions? The application questions take up 2.5 pages as is.	The page limit is for the text of your responses only. We recommend composing your responses in a separate word doc to gauge length and then copying and pasting into the template.	7-17-18
When is the expected award date?	Grantees are expected to be identified in late August.	7-17-18

**Program Evaluation**

Question	Answer	Date
How will the program be evaluated and is there a cost to the local districts?	TEA will procure an outside, independent evaluator to complete program evaluation throughout the lifetime of the grant. The cost for evaluation will be covered by TEA.	7-17-18