Attachment 1 – Texas GEAR UP College & Career Readiness Advising Letter of Interest Project Overview

Contents

1. Purpose

The Texas Education Agency's Beyond Grad initiative seeks to award multi-year grants to eligible college and career readiness advising organizations to build capacity with innovative programs that increase postsecondary preparation, enrollment and persistence among Texas students.

a) Background Information

TEA's Beyond Grad initiative is working to improve college and career readiness (CCR) outcomes by 1) defining core problems faced by local education agencies (LEAs) and CCR advising organizations, 2) piloting innovative solutions, 3) identifying practices that improve outcomes, and 4) scaling successful programs across the state of Texas.

With this multi-year grant opportunity, Beyond Grad will build the capacity and sustainability of external CCR advising organizations. The Beyond Grad team encourages CCR advising organizations to expand and enhance their programs for Texas schools that serve a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students[1], by developing and delivering innovative pilot programs for Texas GEAR UP districts.

Texas has seen a decline in college enrollment for high school graduates. In 2017, 54.7% of Texas high school graduates enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college the following year. As shown in the chart below, from 2014-16 there has been a 2.8% decline in enrollment. The enrollment rate for high schools serving a majority of economically disadvantaged students is 8 percentage points lower than the state average.
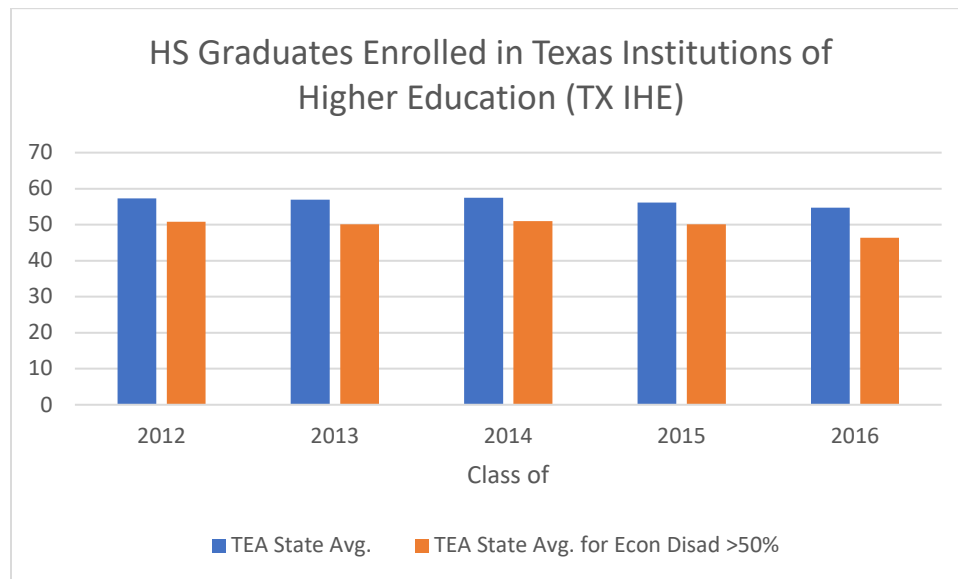
Texas State Avg. of HS Graduate Enrollment in a Texas IHE within one year of graduation. Source: TEA TAPR 2012-13 - 2017-2018 Reports

As Texas looks to the future, it is imperative that more high school graduates attain a postsecondary education. In 2015, Governor Greg Abbott announced the Texas 60X30 plan

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[1] Economically Disadvantaged Students – A student is considered economically disadvantaged if they are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches at school. Source: https://txscools.org

(http://www.60x30tx.com/). Under the plan, by 2030 at least 60% of Texans ages 25-34 should have a certificate or degree.   Reaching this goal will prepare the state's workforce for the jobs that are coming in the changing economy. To reach this milestone, more high school graduates must matriculate from high school to college to complete a postsecondary degree or certificate.

Research demonstrates the importance of CCR advising in connecting students to postsecondary success.[2] Targeted advising has been shown to increase college application and matriculation rates. Examples of advising activities include: counseling students to connect their personal interests and abilities to career options, selection of rigorous courses of study, completion of SAT/ACT tests, and identifying postsecondary steps that align with career interests. Specifically, CCR advisors have proven to be effective in empowering low-income and historically underrepresented minority students. [3]

Many CCR advising organizations currently operate in Texas. However, there is inconsistent access to high-quality advising programs for all students. Very few programs offer services in rural and non-metropolitan areas. In urban areas, where they are most prevalent, programs frequently restrict services to a limited group of students, such as high achieving students or 12th grade students. This may be due to intentional use of a "cohort model" of students identified through selection criteria, or unintentionally, due to advisors with high caseloads prioritizing services for older students or those motivated students who self-advocate.

Additionally, there are service delivery challenges facing the advising organizations. The CCR advising organizations have limited capacity to respond to the excess demand for services from schools and districts. The organizational limitations to respond are numerous, but primarily include:

1. Lack of Financial Resources – dependency upon philanthropy; little financial contribution from schools/districts toward the cost of services; little or no revenue from earned income sources
2. Remote School Locations - logistical challenges to serving schools in rural & non-metro areas in a cost-effective manner
3. Advising Program Model Limitations – many existing program models are specialized toward a specific cohort of students such as high achieving students or 12th grade students

Through extensive research into the current CCR advising programs in Texas, TEA has identified two key opportunities to expand advising services available to schools serving a majority of economically disadvantaged students:

Opportunity 1: Expand the geographic reach of effective CCR advising programs beyond urban areas
Opportunity 2: Support innovative program models that increase the capacity of CCR advising organizations to reach and effectively serve all students, beginning in 9th grade or earlier

Opportunity 1: Expand the geographic reach of effective CCR advising programs beyond urban areas

[2] Avery, C., Howell, J.S., and Page, L., "A Review of the Role of College Counseling, Coaching, and Mentoring on Students' Postsecondary Outcome", *College Board Research,* Research Brief, October 2014.
[3] Bryan, J., Moore-Thomas, C., Day-Vines, N., and Holcomb-McCoy, C., "School Counselors as Social Capital: The Effects of High School College Counseling on College Application Rates", Journal of Counseling and Development, April 2011.

70% of Texas school districts have enrollments of >50% economically disadvantaged students. These districts serve over 3.5 million students or 66% of all students in the state. Of these economically disadvantaged districts, 493 are Rural & Non-Metro School Districts and 150 are Mid-Size City/Town Districts. Combined, these non-urban districts make up over 50% of the districts in the entire state and serve over 1 million students. However, **only 5%** of these districts are served by external CCR advising organizations. This compares to over 60% of the Major Urban & Suburban Districts utilizing these services.

Districts with >50% Econ Disadvantage Served by CCR

Source: TEA, Districts Type, 2016-17, https://tea.texas.gov/acctres/analyze/1617/level.html

Given the high need of these districts and the underrepresentation of their students in postsecondary education, it is a primary focus of this initiative to encourage CCR advising organizations to expand their geographic reach.

Opportunity 2: Support innovative program models that increase the capacity of CCR advising organizations to reach and effectively serve all students, beginning in 9th grade or earlier
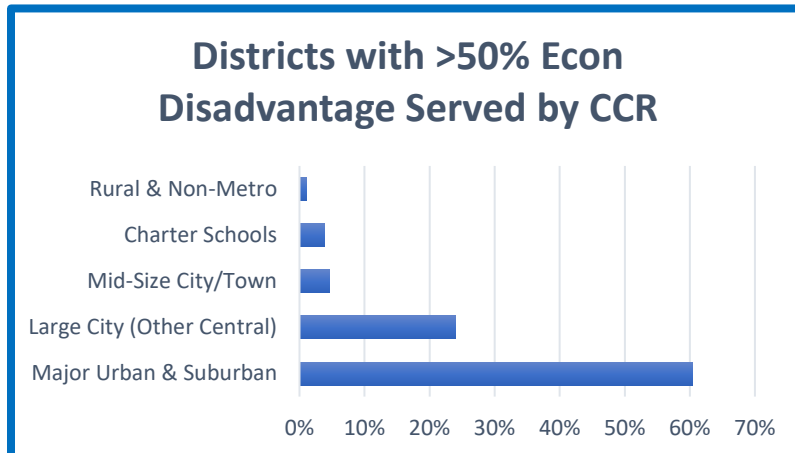
Of the external CCR advising programs that serve students in Texas, 69% of the programs serve only a selective student cohort. These programs typically identify high-achieving, low income, or first-generation students to serve. Through their selective enrollment criteria, these programs limit the number of students that can access the CCR advising resources which could put them on to the road to academic and professional success.

CCR Programs in Texas Service Delivery Model

Whole School Program 31%

Cohort Program 69%
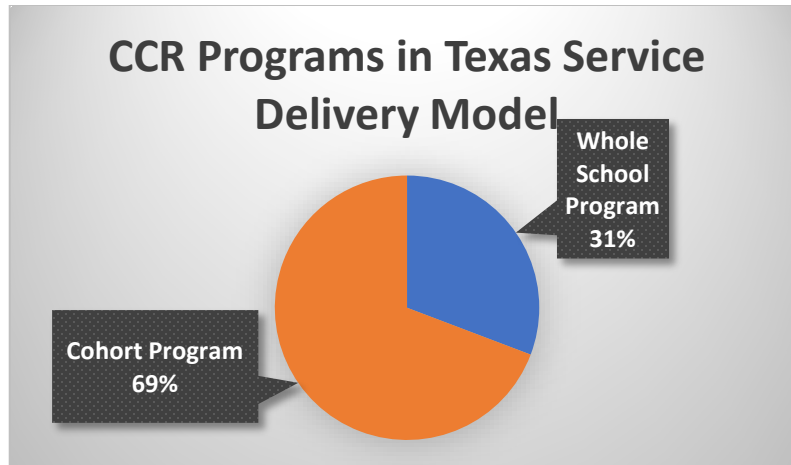
Source: TEA, CCR Research on Programs in Texas

Additionally, in whole school advising models, much of the CCR advising activities focus on the junior and senior students, limiting the impact upon younger students. Research is clear that students who receive personalized CCR advising before 12th grade have greater postsecondary success in the aggregate than their counterparts who only receive CCR advising in 12th grade.[4] Through this grant, TEA seeks to expand capacity of advising organizations to effectively serve all students within a high school. Respondents will need to describe how they will serve students across grades 9 - 12. If the proposed student-to-advisor ratio exceeds 100:1, the respondent must explain what innovative practices will support efficiency and enable the provision of high-quality services to all students.

The opportunities to innovate and expand CCR services in the pilot Texas GEAR UP Districts are numerous. Creative proposals could include but are not limited to:

- Innovative service delivery models (e.g. the utilization of virtual service delivery models; clustered CCR advising service centers across multiple districts);
- Strategic partnerships (e.g. partnerships with complementary organizations to expand services)
- Technology solutions to enhance program efficiency and drive outcomes (e.g. texting campaigns in conjunction with traditional outreach methods; data aggregation system to improve student outcomes and focus counselor interventions).

All proposals should clearly describe new program innovations to be tested in this pilot program, with an aim toward growing the capacity of the organization to serve more students and to serve students more efficiently.

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[4] Bryan, J., Moore-Thomas, C., Day-Vines, N., and Holcomb-McCoy, C., ibid. and Fazekas, Anna, and Warren, Costancia, "Building a Pathway to the Future: Maximizing High School Guidance and Advisory Support", https://www2.ed.gov/programs/slcp/finalbuilding.pdf

b) Texas GEAR UP Overview

TEA is the recipient of a US Department of Education, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) statewide grant. The program is designed to increase the number of low-income students who graduate from high school prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The grant includes two components: 1) providing targeted services to a cohort of six subgrantee districts, and 2) developing statewide initiatives that have the potential to impact students and districts across Texas (see **Attachment 4**). Providing focused CCR advising is one of three statewide initiatives. As part of this initiative, CCR advising organizations will pilot expanded advising services—which may include newly designed advising models—at GEAR UP subgrantee districts and, if successful, may scale across the state of Texas.

GEAR UP LEA grantees:

The selected CCR Advising grantees will provide advising services to be piloted in six GEAR UP subgrantee schools starting with the 2019-20 school year. The districts are organized by their geographic locations in Texas: West, East and Coastal Bend. Each of the districts reflects the varied and diverse demographics and cultures found within the varied landscape of Texas public education. More information on each of the districts and campuses can be found at https://txschools.org/.

The GEAR UP grantees include middle-to-high-school feeder patterns in the following districts:

District	High School	HS Enrollment	MS Enrollment	Total Enrollment	% Econ Disadv**	% English Learners***	College Enrollment in TX 2017****
Culberson County-Allamoore ISD (West TX)	Van Horn School (PK-12)	123		390	75.9	7.2	60.5
Education Service Center (ESC)* 19/San Elizario ISD (West TX)	San Elizario High School	1,026	553	1,579	93.9	50.2	50.0
Mathis ISD (Coastal Bend TX)	Mathis High School	406	384	790	91.1	2.6	53.4
Sinton ISD (Coastal Bend TX)	Sinton High School	624	515	1,139	76.7	1.3	52.5
Cleveland ISD (East TX)	Cleveland High School	1,415	835	2,250	78.7	38.1	41.2
Sheldon ISD (East TX)	C. E. King High School	2,369	1,037	3,406	76.7	28.8	51.0

* Education Service Center 19 – ESCs were established to provide services to school districts throughout the state. The Centers are service organizations, not regulatory arms of the Texas Education Agency, and school participation in ESC services is voluntary. ESC-19 serves West Texas school districts in El Paso and Hudspeth counties.
** %Economically Disadvantaged Students – A student is considered economically disadvantaged if they are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches at school. Source: https://txschools.org/
*** % English Learners – Students whose primary language is one other than English and who are in the process of acquiring English. Source: https://txschools.org/

**** College Enrollment in TX - Data for Texas high school graduates from 2016, that enrolled in Texas public or independent higher education in the following fall. Source: https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tprs/2017/index.html

c) Eligibility Requirements

Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education. The grantee should have strong project management processes and tools in place. Additionally, applicants must provide evidence of a culturally responsive approach to advising and outreach to diverse populations. Applicants should demonstrate ability to meet all requirements stated here-in (see **Attachment 4 for full GEAR UP objectives**).

2. Project Description

Project Overview

TEA's strategy for this initiative is to invest in CCR programs to stimulate the growth of their organizational capacity to serve students across diverse geographic locations, at all GPA levels and all grade levels. In serving the Texas GEAR UP schools, the following activities are expected of each grantee:

> 1) Serve <u>all</u> students in the 9th – 12th grades at partner GEAR UP high schools (services to be provided to students and their parents);
> 2) In coordination with the district and school staff, establish a reasonable advisor caseload that allows individual advising for all high school students, recognizing that advising structures and activities may vary across grade levels;
> 3) Collaborate with all Texas GEAR UP stakeholders (districts, schools, parents, TEA staff, TEA Technical Assistance Providers, etc.) in meeting all applicable Federal program objectives (See **Attachment 4**);
> 4) Continually collaborate with TEA program staff to design, pilot, iterate, and track the success of program innovations;
> 5) Develop a sustainability plan to expand your organization's new programs/program innovations to additional districts beyond the Texas GEAR UP pilot cohort.

The following components are not specifically required but are key opportunities to enhance program efficiency and effectiveness. While these services cannot be directly funded by the grant, they can be used as the program funding match. These components will be negotiated prior to the finalization of any grant award. Proposals which include innovations in one or more of the following areas will receive additional considerations in the review process:

- Mechanism to Drive Advisor Efficiency – Define service delivery tools or techniques used to drive advisor efficiency to increase student outcomes. These may include technology tools or service delivery practices.
- Professional Development for Middle School Counselors and Staff – Providing professional development to middle school counselors or other relevant middle school staff members whose

work is directly related to career pathway advising or who want to become better equipped to support middle school students to develop a career pathway.

- Summer Programs for Middle School Students – Many middle school students fall behind during the summer. Programs which can engage middle school students academically, encourage career exploration or promote enrichment and leadership development can be beneficial for setting long-term academic goals.
- Additional CCR Innovations to Drive Efficiency and Scalability – Describe any program innovations which increase the effectiveness and scalability of the program, while delivering consistent, positive results for students and schools.

2.2 Program Requirements

Successful applicants will be required to provide services to one or more of the GEAR UP pilot geographic regions. The applicant's response should address how they will serve one or more of the following geographic regions:

☐ West Texas (Culberson County-Allamoore & ESC 19/San Elizario ISDs)

☐ East Texas (Cleveland & Sheldon ISDs)

☐ Coastal Bend Texas (Mathis & Sinton ISDs)

Applicants can apply to serve more than one region. Applicants can request a specific geographic designation (West, East, or Coastal Bend) to work with, but the final decisions will be made by the TEA Beyond Grad staff. The district assignments will be announced with the grant awards.

Project Phases
The successful applicants for this initiative will participate in 11 project phases. The phases include:

1) Needs Assessment with assigned LEA(s)
2) Establish Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with assigned LEA(s)
3) Continuous Improvement Cycle
4) College & Career Readiness (CCR) Training with assigned LEA(s)
5) CCR Advisor Hiring & Training
6) CCR Advising Program Initiation
7) CCR Program Data Collection & Reporting
8) Beyond Grad Advisory Council
9) Student Summer Programming
10) Fidelity of Implementation Planning
11) Program Sustainability Plan

Grant funding agreements entered under this LOI will be for renewable one-year grants up to three (3) years. All grant awards will be reviewed at the end of each academic year for renewal. All funding awards, and renewals, will be made based upon CCR advising organizational performance and available funding. The three-year award period will run from the initial award date through July 2022.

Grant funds will be provided based upon the number of school districts assigned to the advising organization. TEA reserves the right to adjust the award amount or scope of work over the award period based on district needs, applicant's ability to expend funds in a timely manner or any other factor.

Additionally, a future competitive opportunity is anticipated for academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24. The details of this opportunity are to be determined, based upon preliminary pilot results.

During the award period, grant awards will decrease from year to year. In the second year of the grant period, the grant recipient will provide 15% of the program budget. In the third year of the grant period the grant recipient will provide 25% of the program budget. The chart below summarizes the award periods and funding schedule:

Funding Schedule			
Award Period	Yr1 (2019-20) (estimate 15 months, April 2019-July 2020)	Yr2 (2020-21) (12 months)	Yr3 (2021-22) (12 months
TEA (GEAR UP Funds)	100%	85%	75%
Advising Organization	0	15%	25%

2.2.1 Needs Assessment with assigned LEA(s)

Each CCR organization will complete a College and Career Readiness needs assessment and asset map for their assigned districts. The CCR program will visit the assigned Texas GEAR UP LEA and assess the district, high school, and middle school to determine the CCR advising strengths and opportunities for growth.

Upon completion of the campus needs assessment and asset map, the advising organization will submit a service delivery recommendation. After it is reviewed and approved by TEA, the recommendation will serve as the foundation for an MOU with the LEA for delivering CCR advising.

While the Needs Assessment will be specific to the school, the resulting strategies tested should be scalable to other schools across the state.

2.2.2 Memorandum of Understanding with assigned LEA(s)

Each CCR grantee will develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each of the school districts which they provide services. The MOU must address the following list of topics at a minimum:

- Data Sharing with district(s), schools, and TEA
- Initial Needs Assessment and Asset Map Site Visit (Grant Manager, Program Manager, Advisor's Supervisor)
- Site Visits & Counselor CCR Professional Development
- CCR Activity Coordination for students and parents

- Regular (Monthly) Data Reporting
- Communication Schedule
- Advisor On-site Supervision
- Advisor Organizational Supervisor and Contact Information

The MOU, agreed upon by both parties, must be approved by TEA prior to the implementation of services.

2.2.3 Continuous Improvement Cycle

The Beyond Grad Initiative will embrace a Continuous Improvement Cycle where all stakeholders will participate in the planning, implementation and reflection process of the program. The stakeholders in the project are the Texas GEAR UP grantee districts administration, staff and students, the CCR advising organizations, Technical Assistance providers and TEA staff.

Beyond Grad Annual Planning Cycle

- Before the Academic Year starts, stakeholders (CCR Advisor, CCR Grant Manager, District Grant Manager, District/School Advisors, Teachers, TEA staff) will establish outcome goals for each district/school. These goals will be driven by the Texas GEAR UP program metrics (see **Attachment 4, Appendix B:** Texas GEAR UP Summative Metrics), prior year outcomes, and CCR student activity goals.
- CCR advising grantees and TEA Beyond Grad staff will hold Texas GEAR UP Check-In calls every two weeks to discuss program activities and outcomes. These calls will also be used to address any adjustments to the monthly goals. Agendas for these calls will be prepared by the CCR advising grantees.
- CCR advising grantees will provide monthly reports on progress toward monthly goals.
- A Mid-Year Review will be held to assess the progress of the program. All stakeholders will participate in this review. The purpose of the review is to assess improvements in the program's delivery to determine if adjustments are needed to reach the annual goals. The agenda for the review will be submitted by the CCR advising organization and approved by TEA.
- A Full-Year Program Review will include a review of the student and program goals and outcomes for the year. The agenda for the review will be submitted by the CCR advising organization and approved by TEA. The process will focus on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the delivery model, and address program modifications, if needed. Any changes that are made will be in collaboration with the LEA and TEA in the next academic year.
- MOUs between CCR advising organizations and LEAs will also be reviewed annually. After the Program Full-Year Review is completed, the CCR and LEAs will review the MOU. Based upon the annual Review and performance, the MOU between both parties will be renegotiated. Before the revised MOU is finalized, it must be approved by TEA.

The Beyond Grad Annual Planning Cycle will be repeated annually with goal setting prior to the start of the school year, monthly monitoring of activities, and full-year program reviews at the end of the academic year. Fundamental to this process is the identification of opportunities to increase efficiency and student outcomes.

2.2.4 College & Career Readiness Training

To ensure the alignment of the CCR advising organization and assigned LEAs, a training will be held prior to the start of the school year with each district. The CCR advising organization will provide training to the district on their service delivery methodology, data system requirements, and partner expectations. The assigned LEA will provide the advising organization with training on their student data system(s), school operational policies and procedures, and space allocation for advisors. The training agenda must be approved by TEA prior to the implementation of the training. Documentation of the agenda, attendance and information items addressed in the training must be submitted to TEA. TEA staff will attend this training to observe and clarify program objectives as needed.

Training will be required annually for both CCR advising organizations and district grantees.

2.2.5 CCR Advisor Hiring & Training

The CCR advising organization is responsible for the hiring and training of CCR advisors working with students. These activities must take place before the start of each academic school year. The advisor training will include introductions to the district staff at the local school levels. The training agenda must be approved by TEA prior to the implementation of the training. Documentation on the agenda, attendance and information items addressed in the training are to be submitted to TEA.

2.2.6 CCR Advising Program Initiation

Advising program services will begin at the start of the 2019-20 academic school year. Services will be provided at the assigned high schools as designated within the MOU. There are numerous activities required for the program documented in **Attachment 4**.

2.2.7 Data Collection & Reporting

The Texas GEAR UP program has rigorous activity and outcome reporting expectations. CCR Advising Program reports include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Monthly Student Contact Reporting (type of contact and amount of time)
- Student Milestone Reporting (e.g. FAFSA/TAFSA completion, ACT/SAT/TSI training & results, essay completion, college application submissions, career certifications completed, financial literacy)
- Student Event Details (College visits, Financial Literacy workshops, College Fairs, etc.)
- Parent Meetings and Event Attendance
- Mid-year Student Status Report
- End of School Year Review (including student postsecondary enrollment, matriculation, employment, etc.)
- GEAR UP Annual Performance Report (APR)
- Student Agency Pre-/Post-Surveys

2.2.8 Beyond Grad Advisory Council

As a stakeholder in the Texas GEAR UP program, representatives from CCR advising partners will participate in the Beyond Grad Advisory Council. The purpose for the Council is to share program updates and concerns/wins/best practices from the field. The Council will be made up of all the GEAR UP grantee districts, school, TEA Beyond Grad staff, CCR partners, educational leaders, and community partners.

2.2.9 High School Student Summer Programming

The CCR advising partner will provide a summer program activity to keep students engaged in the college and career readiness process. Services should be targeted for high school students based upon the needs identified by the organization and LEA. Documentation on the agenda, attendance and information items addressed in the summer program will need to be submitted to TEA. The program agenda must be approved by TEA prior to the event.

Because middle school summer programing is an optional requirement for this grant opportunity, proposals that include middle school students' access to summer programming will receive special consideration.

2.2.10 Fidelity of Implementation

To effectively replicate and eventually scale the results of this CCR advising initiative, the project will include the development of a Fidelity of Implementation (FOI) rubric. Education and social service research demonstrates that the implementation of evidence-based programs has a direct impact upon the effectiveness of a program.[5]   In coordination with the GEAR UP LEAs, the grantees will participate in the process for developing the implementation rubric. The FOI rubric will provide future district or campus administrators with guidance for how to achieve high quality implementation of CCR advising and a methodology to determine if FOI has been achieved once the CCR program is implemented. TEA will provide technical assistance (TA) guidance and vetting for the development of the rubric.

2.2.11 Program Sustainability Planning

An objective of this grant opportunity is to establish sustainable CCR advising programs for both districts and advising organizations. For districts this will require the commitment of resources to maintain CCR advising activities after the GEAR UP program is finished.

For CCR advising organizations, sustainability refers to the long-term plan to provide more CCR advising services to more school districts across the state. The CCR organizations must work with TEA to establish a sustainability plan which will assure the long-term availability and growth of new programs or program innovations developed through this grant opportunity. A component of the sustainability plan will be for the organization to document how the programmatic capacity building components of the grant award are used to expand advising services outside of the pilot project sites. Establishing the sustainability plan will reflect the culmination of all Texas GEAR UP activities and the Beyond Grad Advising Initiative.

3. Critical Dates for Applicants

Please review the critical dates in the chart below and follow the submission instructions listed for each step.

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[5] The IRIS Center, (2014). Evidence-Based Practices (Part 2): Implementing a Practice or Program with Fidelity. Retrieved from http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ebp_02/

Date	Event
February 6, 2019	Request for Competitive Letters of Interest for providing CCR Advising services is Posted.
February 13, 2019	Last day to submit written questions about Texas GEAR UP CCR grant, no later than 5:00 p.m. CT; Send to BeyondGrad@tea.texas.gov with the subject line: "GU - CCR – LOI Question <ORGANIZATION NAME>"
February 15, 2019	Webinar for eligible organizations on February 15, 2019 from 10:00 A.M. CT. Register for the webinar at the following URL: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2673224325536122370
February 19, 2019	TEA responses to questions submitted prior to and during the webinar posted to the Beyond Grad website: https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/College,_Career,_and_Military_Prep/Beyond_Grad/
February 22, 2019	Notice of Intent to Submit a Response (Optional) due to TEA no later than 5:00 P.M. CT; Send to BeyondGrad@tea.texas.gov with the subject line: "GU – CCR - LOI Notice of Intent <ORGANIZATION NAME>."
March 8, 2019	Applicant responses and budgets due to TEA no later than 12:00 Noon CT; Send to BeyondGrad@tea.texas.gov with the subject line: "GU - CCR – LOI Response Forms <ORGANIZATION NAME>"
Mid-March, 2019	Evaluation and selection process
Late March, 2019	Grantee award notification
April 2019	CCR Advising organization district site visits
May 2019	CCR Advising organizations and districts negotiate MOU
August 2019	GEAR UP CCR Advising activities begin

a) Informational Webinar

TEA will host a webinar to discuss the key programmatic requirements of the CCR advising grant proposal, provide an overview of the project vision, review eligibility requirements, and respond to the questions that were received in writing by the due date stated above. The webinar is for informational purposes and will be held on February 15, 2019 from 10:00 A.M. CT. Register for the webinar at the following URL: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2673224325536122370. The webinar will be open to all nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education eligible to apply to the grant.

b) Requests for Additional Information

To ensure that no grant candidate gains a competitive advantage by acquiring information unknown to other candidates, any information that is different from or supplemental to information provided in this LOI will be provided only in response to written inquiries. All responses to written inquiries will be posted in a general FAQ for all candidates to view.

4. Program Administration

To ensure successful implementation, monitoring and management of all CCR activities with GEAR UP LEAs, Texas GEAR UP requires the following:

- Designate a Texas GEAR UP CCR Advising Grant Manager.
- Participate in bi-weekly status meetings with TEA program staff to monitor implementation, track progress towards metrics and coordinate on best practices.
- Send sufficient and appropriate personnel to the national GEAR UP conference(s), the Texas GEAR UP State Conference, and all grant-related meetings.
- In coordination with state-designated technical assistance providers:
  - Collect and monitor program participation and performance data and maintain sufficient and appropriate records.
  - Complete and submit all state and federal project evaluation and reporting requirements to appropriate personnel in the format requested and by the stated deadline.

5. Use of Funds

a) Grant Phases and Funding

Grant funding agreements entered under this LOI will be for renewable, one-year grants up to three (3) years. TEA reserves the right to not award a grant from this competitive Letter of Interest. All grant awards will be reviewed at the end of each academic year for renewal. All funding awards, and renewals, will be made based upon CCR advising organizational performance and available funding. The three-year award period will run from the initial award date through July 2022.

Grant funds will be provided based upon the number of school districts assigned to the advising organization. TEA reserves the right to adjust the award amount or scope of work over the award period based on district needs, applicant's ability to expend funds in a timely manner or any other factor.

It is anticipated that initial grants of up to $100,000 will be provided, per district, during the award period, based upon the budget request and dependent upon available funds. The LOI applicant's response needs to address how they will serve one or more of the following geographic regions:

☐ West Texas (Culberson County-Allamoore & ESC 19/San Elizario ISDs)

☐ East Texas (Cleveland & Sheldon ISDs)

☐ Coastal Bend Texas (Mathis & Sinton ISDs)

Applicants can apply to serve more than one region. Applicants can request a specific geographic designation (West, East, or Coastal Bend) to work with, but the final decisions will be made by the TEA Beyond Grad staff. The district assignments will be announced with the grant awards.

During the award period, grant awards will decrease over the course of the award period. In the second year of the grant period, the grant funding will provide 85% of the program budget. In the third year of the grant period the grant funding will provide 75% of the program budget. The goal of this funding structure is to assist and incentivize CCR advising organizations in reducing their cost per student served, through their implementation of innovative programs.

Annual awarded grants will be funded through a combination of TEA and district funds, with an expectation that districts will plan to increase their contribution over time. Each awardee will receive their total award amount. The fund distribution schedule will be provided monthly on a reimbursement basis.

The chart below summarizes the award periods and funding schedule:

Funding Schedule			
Award Period	Yr1 (2019-20) (estimate 15 months, April 2019-July 2020)	Yr2 (2020-21) (12 months)	Yr3 (2021-22) (12 months
TEA (GEAR UP Funds)	100%	85%	75%
Advising Organization	0	15%	25%

This chart was also presented on page 9.

Grant funds will be provided based upon the number of school districts assigned to the advising organization. To verify their eligibility for each renewal grant and secure continued funding, grantees will be required to submit renewal applications, reporting on key activities and progress towards goals on an annual basis. TEA reserves the right to update program requirements and activities to ensure program design is driving progress towards desired outcomes. Any updates to requirements will be available to grantees in advance of the renewal application period.

b) Allowable Use of Funds

- Grant Administration
- Advisor salary
- Advisor training
- Program cost and GEAR UP events
- College visits
- Technology enhancements to improve advisor efficiency and effectiveness
- Student and parent outreach and education
- Professional development for instructors and administrators
- Travel to and from required conferences and meetings for appropriate personnel

c) Non-allowable use of funds:

- Renovation or remodel of existing buildings

- Technology and/or other resource enhancements that are not directly related to the program goals

Grant funds must supplement (increase level of service), and not supplant (replace) state or local funds.

6. Overview of Required Application materials

Interested candidates should review and complete **Attachments 2 (Optional), 3A and 3B**.

- Please notify TEA of your intent to submit a Letter of Interest by emailing **Attachment 2 (Optional) by February 22, 2019 at 5pm CT**. Submission should be emailed to BeyondGrad@tea.texas.gov with the subject line "GU – CCR - LOI Notice of Intent <ORGANIZATION NAME>."
- Please submit your completed Letter of Interest, comprised of **Attachments 3A and 3B by March 6, 2019 at 5pm CT**. Submission should be emailed to BeyondGrad@tea.texas.gov with the subject line "GU – CCR - LOI Response Forms <ORGANIZATION NAME>."

TEA will review the letters of interest and use the scoring rubric (Attachment 5) to evaluate. Successful proposers will be contacted regarding timeline and next steps.

For assistance, please send questions to BeyondGrad@tea.texas.gov.