

June 28, 2018

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Request for Competitive Letters of Interest for New GEAR UP Texas Cohort

The Texas Education Agency is pleased to announce a grant opportunity for local education agencies to participate in Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). These grants are scheduled to be awarded for implementation in the fall of the 2018-2019 school year. Selected grantees will be awarded up to \$350,000 the first year; grantees who successfully carry out grant requirements will be awarded up to seven annual grants starting Fall 2018 and ending Fall 2024.

Program Description

GEAR UP, in accordance with the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, Chapter 2, aims to increase preparation for and participation in postsecondary education among low-income students. Texas GEAR UP programs will follow cohorts starting in seventh grade through graduation from high school. Grantees will be required to carry out activities aligned to each of five strategies:

- 1) **Strategy 1: Increase Academic Rigor** - Facilitate an increase in access to, perceived value of, and student success in academically rigorous courses through extensive professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators, and targeted tutoring for students.
- 2) **Strategy 2: Prepare Middle School Students** - Empower students with pathway information early on through individualized college and career advising in middle school and adoption of a high-quality, TEKS-aligned career exploration course.
- 3) **Strategy 3: Expand College and Career Advising and Resources for High School Students** - Mitigate the effects of high student-to-counselor ratios and provide robust, individualized college and career advising through the adoption of a Near Peer Advising model in GEAR UP high schools.
- 4) **Strategy 4: Leverage Technology** - Expand advisor capacity and amplify high-quality resources through the adoption of targeted, user-centered technology tools for advisors, counselors, administrators, students and parents.
- 5) **Strategy 5: Develop Local Alliances** – Establish or expand existing alliances with business, higher education, and community partners that support student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.

Throughout the lifetime of the grant, grantees will participate in a pilot-and-iterate framework of key project initiatives to ensure improvement throughout the lifetime of the grant, inform sustainability planning for grantees, and lay the groundwork for scale across Texas.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants are local education agencies, including public school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and regional education service centers. LEAs may submit applications on behalf of a feeder pattern within a district or open-enrollment charter school. A separate application is required for each feeder pattern. Qualifying feeder patterns must: 1) serve a high percentage of students designated as economically disadvantaged (at least 50% at

any participating campus); and 2) have a promotion rate of at least 70% from each participating middle school into the feeder high school.

Interested applicants should review the detailed Request for Letters of Interest in Attachment 1 and the Appendix in Attachment 3. To apply, submit the required response using the templates provided in Attachments 2A, 2B and 2C. Applicants should reference Attachment 2D for guidance in developing high-quality responses.

Thank you,

Alexis Bauserman
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Texas Education Agency
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Application Materials

[Attachment 1](#) – Texas GEAR UP Request for Letters of Interest

[Attachment 2A](#) – Intent to Submit a Letter of Interest

[Attachment 2B](#) – LEA Information Form

[Attachment 2C](#) – LEA Qualitative Questions Form

[Attachment 2D](#) – Qualitative Questions Scoring Rubric

[Attachment 3](#) – Appendix

Due Dates

7/20/2018 - 5:00 P.M., CT – Submit Attachment 2A - Intent to Submit a Proposal

8/10/2018 - 5:00 P.M., CT – Submit Attachments 2B, and 2C – LOI Response Forms