**Attachment 4 – Overview of GEAR UP Grants**

## Overview of GEAR UP Grants

GEAR UP is a federal discretionary grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education. GEAR UP awards are granted to states to:

* Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of participating students;
* Increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education or participating students; and
* Increase the educational expectations for participating students and family knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation and financing.

In 2017, the US Department of Education awarded the TEA with a grant (Texas GU) to advance the objectives listed above. The TEA, in turn, will award two types of grantees:

* Local Education Agency (LEA) Grantees
TEA will select feeder patterns (combinations of middle school and high school campuses) at 6-10 districts to receive Texas GU funding. These campuses will serve approximately 2,500 students.
* Technical Assistance Grantees
This request for Letters of Interest (LOIs) will result in the selection of ESCs, IHEs, or non-profit grantees who will build instructional and performance management competencies at LEA grantee sites.

## Local Education Agency Grantees

LEA grantees will apply a pilot-and-iterate framework to key GU initiatives to ensure improvement throughout the lifetime of the grant, inform sustainability planning, and lay the groundwork for scale across Texas. LEA grantees will support economically disadvantaged students achieve GEAR UP objectives through five primary 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.

TEA will award campuses at 6-10 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with grants to launch these strategies at campuses or sets of campuses serving students in 7th through 12th grade. LEA Grant awardees may be selected by August of 2018, with GU activities commencing at LEA grantee campuses as early as September of 2018.

## Explanation of Student Groups

GU LEA grantees will serve students in two student groupings: the Cohort Model and the Priority Model. Explanations of these groupings are provided so that applicants can understand the terminology of certain required FOI outcomes.

The Cohort Model targets a grade-specific cohort of students with services as they progress through middle school and high school and into postsecondary education. In this model, the primary cohort is composed of all students beginning in grade 7 in participating schools within a feeder pattern. Throughout the lifetime of the grant, Texas GEAR UP will continue to serve the original seventh grade primary cohort as they proceed to the first year of postsecondary education.

In addition, LEAs will implement a Priority Model. Priority students are defined as students in grades 7-12 who will receive basic GEAR UP services by virtue of attending a GEAR UP campus, both before and after the primary cohort is located at that campus.