Request for Application

Program Guidelines

2024-2025 Texas GEAR UP (GU) Grants to Districts

Authorized by Public Law 105-244, The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Title IV, Subpart 2, Chapter 2, Sections 404 A-H

Contents

2024-2025 TEXAS GEAR UP (GU) GRANTS TO DISTRICTS
SAS #406-25

Introduction to the Program Guidelines

TEA, as the pass-through entity[1], is the grantee[2] from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and TEA awards subgrants to non-federal entities[3] such as local educational agencies (LEAs), including school districts, charter schools, and education service centers, and to a lesser degree institutions of higher education (IHEs), and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) who are the agency's subgrantees[4]. These guidelines apply to all subgrantees of TEA, regardless of whether referenced herein as subgrantee or grantee. For purposes of this document, TEA may use the terms grantee and subgrantee synonymously for its subrecipients.

This part of the request for application (RFA), Program Guidelines, is to be used in conjunction with the General and Fiscal Guidelines and any application instructions. The Standard Application System (SAS) consists of Application Part 1 (PDF – narrative schedules) and Application Part 2 (Excel – budget schedules) to be completed in order for the applicant to be eligible for funding.

For applicants selected for funding, all guidelines and instructions will be incorporated by reference into the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA).

Reference to the General and Fiscal Guidelines

The Program Guidelines provide information specifically relevant to this grant program. The General and Fiscal Guidelines provide information relevant to all TEA grant programs. Throughout the Program Guidelines, cross-references are given to applicable sections of the General and Fiscal Guidelines. It is critical that you review all referenced sections of the General and Fiscal Guidelines when preparing your application.

Errata Notices

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Errata Notices.

---

[1] Pass-through entity is defined as a non-Federal entity that provides a subaward to a subrecipient to carry out part of a federal program. (2 CFR 200.74)

[2] Grantee is defined as the legal entity to which a grant is awarded and that is accountable to the federal government for the use of the funds provided. The term "grantee" does not include any secondary recipients, such as subgrantees and contractors that may receive funds from a grantee. (34 CFR 77)

[3] Non-federal entity is defined as a state, local government, Indian tribe, institution of higher education, or nonprofit organization that carries out a federal award as a recipient or subrecipient. (2 CFR 200.69)

[4] Subgrantee is defined by TEA to be the same as a subrecipient which is defined as a non-federal entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a federal program; but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such program. (2 CFR 200.93) Subgrantee is defined in 34 CFR 77 as the legal entity to which a subgrant is awarded and that is accountable to the grantee for the use of the funds provided.

Contact for Clarifying Information

Grant Program Contact

Brittany Eldred, Program Coordinator
College, Career and Military Preparation Division
Brittany.Eldred@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 463-9794

Funding Contact

Angelica Soriano, Grant Manager
Grants Administration Division
Angelica.Soriano@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 463-8525

US Department of Education and/or State Appropriations

The following is provided in compliance with the US Department of Education Appropriations Act:

Category	Amount
Total funds available for this project	$1,200,000
Percentage to be financed with federal funds	100%
Amount of federal funds	$1,200,000
Percentage to be financed from nonfederal sources	0%
Amount of nonfederal funds	$0

Grant Timeline

For all dates related to the grant, including reporting dates, see the TEA Grant Opportunities page. If a report due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the report will be due the following business day. All dates except the grant ending date may vary slightly as conditions require.

Grant at a Glance

This section provides detailed information about the grant program.

Program Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (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 grants at the state level to achieve the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of participating students;

- **Objective 2:** Increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education of participating students; and

- **Objective 3:** Increase the educational expectations for participating students and family knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation and financing.

As a state grant recipient, Texas GEAR UP seeks to achieve these objectives through a coordinated approach of innovative strategies, outlined below. Core to the vision of Texas GEAR UP is ensuring the scalability and sustainability of programmatic interventions, to foster a long-term exponential impact across Texas. 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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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 CCR Advising model in GEAR UP high schools.

- **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.

- **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.

Eligible Applicants

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Eligibility for Funding.

Eligibility List

An eligibility list is posted in the Application and Support Information section of the TEA Grant Opportunities page.

Shared Services Arrangement

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Shared Services Arrangements.

Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) may serve as fiscal agents for an SSA for this grant.

Cost Share or Matching Requirement

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Cost Share/Match Requirement.

The authorizing statute requires a 100% match for this program.

Supplement, Not Supplant

For supplement, not supplant guidance, see the Supplement, Not Supplant Handbook on the Department of Grant Compliance and Administration's Training and Other Resources page.

The supplement, not supplant provision does apply to this grant program.

Limitation of Administrative Funds

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Administrative Costs.

NOTE: Administrative funds include **both** direct administrative costs **and** allowable indirect costs.

Direct Administrative Costs

The authorizing statute limits the amount of direct administrative costs for this grant program to no more than 8% of the total grant award.

Indirect Costs

For this federally funded grant, the grantee may claim a maximum for indirect costs equal to its current approved restricted indirect cost rate.

To calculate the maximum indirect costs that can be claimed for a grant, complete the [Maximum Indirect Costs Worksheet](#), located on the Grants Administration Division's [Grant Resources](#) page.

Pre-Award Costs

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Pre-Award Costs.

Pre-award costs are permitted, if requested, from September 26, 2024, to stamp-in date.

Application Requirements and Assurances

This section identifies the types of requirements in which applicants must comply to be eligible for funding:

- Statutory requirements (requirements defined in the authorizing statute)
- TEA program requirements (requirements defined by TEA program staff)

Statutory Requirements

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Statutory Requirements.

Per Section 22.0834 of the Texas Education Code (TEC), any person offered employment by any entity that contracts with TEA or receives grant funds administered by TEA (i.e., a grantee or subgrantee) is subject to the fingerprinting requirement. TEA is prohibited from awarding grant funds to any entity, including nonprofit organizations, that fails to comply with this requirement. For details, refer to the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Fingerprinting Requirement.

The following requirements are defined in the statute that authorizes this program. The applicant must comply with each of these requirements in the application to be considered for funding:

1. Provide support and maintain a commitment to eligible low-income students, including students with disabilities, to assist the students in obtaining a secondary school diploma, and to prepare for and succeed in postsecondary education by providing:

   a. Financial assistance, academic support, additional counseling, mentoring, outreach, and supportive services to secondary school students, including students with disabilities, to reduce the risk of such students dropping out of school, and the need for remedial education for such students at the remedial level; and

   b. Information to students and their families about the advantages of obtaining a postsecondary education and college financing options for the students and their families.

2. Provide comprehensive mentoring, outreach, financial aid information, and supportive services to students participating in GEAR UP, including:

    a. Financial aid information for postsecondary education;

    b. Encourage student enrollment in rigorous and challenging curricula and coursework, to reduce the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level; and

    c. Improve the number of participating students who obtain a secondary diploma and complete applications for and enroll in a program of postsecondary education.

3. Provide services to cohort students, their parents and families, and educators in participating campuses and feeder patterns.

4. Design and implement programs in accordance with GEAR UP's authorizing legislation (P.L. 110-315, Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Title IV, Part A, Section 404, Subpart 2) and the Texas GEAR UP plan approved by the US Department of Education (USDE).

TEA Program Requirements

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, TEA Program Requirements.

In addition to the statutory requirements, TEA has established the following program requirements. The applicant must comply with each of these requirements in the application to be considered for funding:

District grantees are required to perform activities outlined below for each strategy and in cooperation with each technical assistance provider.

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.

- Provide professional development to core content teachers.
- Provide professional development to vertical teams.
- Provide targeted tutoring to students with failing grades.

Strategy 2: Prepare Middle School Students- Empower students with pathway information early, through individualized college and career advising in middle school, and adoption of a high-quality, TEKS-aligned career exploration course.

- Implement a middle school college and career exploration course for 7th or 8th grade students.
- Ensure availability of Algebra I in 8th grade.
- Middle school students who receive a failing grade on a progress report will receive targeted academic tutoring in the failing subject and/or related supports.
- Students will receive at least one comprehensive, individualized college and career counseling session.
- Facilitate at least one college visit for students per year.

2024-2025 TEXAS GEAR UP (GU) GRANTS TO DISTRICTS
SAS #406-25

TEA

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 college and career readiness advising partners, approved by TEA, in GEAR UP high schools (9th – 12th grades).

- The district will hire a full-time college and career advisor to engage students in all high school grades and provide them information about postsecondary and career options, preparation, and financing.

- Provide a dedicated space for college and career advising activities, including individual advising sessions, family meetings and group activities. If provision of a dedicated physical space is not possible, applicant must provide a plan for use of common space to accommodate these activities.

- Engage district CCR Advisor in all activities supporting college and career readiness.

- Each year, parent attendance at Texas GU events and services will increase.

- High School students will participate in a comprehensive mentoring program.

- High School counselors and advisors will complete training in college and career advising, provided by TEA through Texas OnCourse Academy.

Strategy 4: Leverage Technology – Expand advisor capacity and amplify high-quality resources through the adoption of targeted, user-centered technology tools for advisors, counselors, students and parents.

- Pilot and implement CoPilot to support the work of school counselors, advisors, GU Grant Coordinators, and other appropriate programmatic positions. The tool should include resources for parents, students, counselors, and administrators.

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.

- Form a local advisory council, including public and higher education personnel, parents, and business and community members to meet quarterly and advise the LEA's implementation, review progress toward LEA goals and build external community support. This group should result in enhanced resources for students regarding school pathways, scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness, mentorship opportunities, etc.

- Facilitate work-based learning opportunities for students through local partnerships.

Technical Assistance YR 7 Required Cooperative Activities

1. TNTP, Inc.

   a. Professional Development for Core Content Teachers and Vertical Teams

   b. Performance Management

2024-2025 TEXAS GEAR UP (GU) GRANTS TO DISTRICTS
SAS #406-25

2. College Possible

   a. Support primary cohort class of 2024 with postsecondary success and technical support for CCR advising

   b. Collect and analyze data with primary and priority cohorts

3. ICF

   a. Program Evaluation

Program-Specific Assurances

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Provisions and Assurances.

The program-specific assurances for this grant program are listed in the Application Part 1.

Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

Refer to the Budgeting Costs Guidance Handbook on the Grants Administration Division's Grant Resources page for general guidance on allowable activities and use of funds.

Allowable activities and use of funds for this grant include only the following:

General Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

- Up to 50% of Grant Coordinator salary

- Materials and supplies for College Center and GEAR UP Events

- College Visits

- Student and parent outreach and education

- Purchase of technology for the purpose of delivering GEAR UP activities virtually

- Professional development for instructors and administrators

- Tutoring services and resources for students

- Facilitating partnerships with business, higher education or community partners

- Travel to and from required conferences and meetings for appropriate personnel

- Professional and Contracted services

- Debt services (lease liabilities for terms greater than 12 months) — allowable costs include:

  o Subscription-based Information Technology Arrangement (SBITA) – Principal Costs (6514)

  o Subscription-based Information Technology Arrangement (SBITA) – Interest Costs (6526)

Operating Costs Requiring Specific Approval in the Grant Application (6400)

Out-of-State Travel

Out-of-state travel costs are allowable. Out-of-state travel costs should be minimal. Travel costs are allowable as long as the expenses for transportation, lodging, subsistence, and related items are only incurred by employees on official business of the grantee and follow the grantee's regular business operations and written travel policy.

Out-of-state travel will require a written justification form to be maintained locally and made available to TEA upon request. To access the Justification for Out-of-State Travel form, refer to the Forms for Prior Approval, Disclosure, and Justification page.

Travel for Students to Conferences (Does Not Include Field Trips)

Costs for travel for students to conferences may be funded under the grant program (does not include field trips). Travel costs should be minimal and must follow the grantee's written travel policy.

Travel for students to conferences will require pre-authorization in writing. To access the pre-authorization form for participant support costs, refer to the Forms for Prior Approval, Disclosure, and Justification page.

Field Trips

Field trips may be funded under the grant program. Only the following types of field trips may be allowable:

- Visits to college campuses
- Field trips that support career exploration
- Other field trips that support college and career readiness programming as agreed upon with College and Career Readiness Advising partner and approved by TEA program staff.

Field trips will require a written justification form to be maintained locally and made available to TEA upon request. To access the Justification for Educational Field Trips form, refer to the Forms for Prior Approval, Disclosure, and Justification page.

Travel Costs for Officials such as Executive Director, Superintendent, or Board Members

Travel costs for officials such as executive director, superintendent, or board members may be funded under the grant program. Only the following travel costs may be allowable for these positions:

- Travel costs for officials such as Executive Director, Superintendent, or Board Members, to be approved by TEA, GEAR UP Program Manager, prior to incurring the expense. Each request will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Cost of Membership in Any Civic or Community Organization

The cost of membership in any civic or community organization may be funded under the grant program. Only the following types of civic or community organization membership may be allowable:

- Memberships in professional associations that support professional development for college and career readiness.
- Other memberships that support college and career readiness programming as agreed upon with College and Career Readiness Advising staff and approved by TEA program staff.

Advisory Council

An advisory council may be funded under the grant program. Only the following types of advisory council costs may be allowable:

- Local GEAR UP Advisory Council

Unallowable Activities and Use of Funds

Refer to the Budgeting Costs Guidance Handbook on the Grants Administration Division's Grant Resources page for general guidance on unallowable costs.

In addition, unallowable activities and use of funds for this grant include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Rental or lease of building space
- Debt services (lease liabilities for terms greater than 12 months) — unallowable costs include:
  - Capital Lease Liability — Principal Costs (6512)
  - Capital Lease Liability – Interest Costs (6522)
  - Interest on Debt Costs (6523)
- Hosting or sponsoring of conferences
- More than 50% of the district (ISD) grant coordinator salary
- More than 50% of advising staff position
- More than 50% of Education Service Center (ESC) grant coordinator salary
- Renovation or remodel of existing buildings
- Stipends for non-employees

2024-2025 TEXAS GEAR UP (GU) GRANTS TO DISTRICTS
SAS #406-25

TEA

- Non-employee costs for conferences
- Capital Outlay
- Any activity not specified above in the Allowable Activities and Use of Funds section

Performance Measures

The applicant agrees to collect data and report on the following mandatory performance measures:

1. Each year, 50% of high school core content teachers will participate in professional development that supports a rigorous curriculum (project-based learning, advanced instructional strategies, teacher externships, student engagement, etc.)

2. Each year, teams of educators and administrators (middle school, high school, and institutions of higher education) will complete at least five days of vertical teaming in order to align curriculum and reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.

3. Each year, 20% of high school core content teachers will participate in at least three individualized educator coaching and/or mentoring sessions.

4. Each year, 85% of tenth graders will take the PSAT or ACT Aspire exam. Each year, 85% of eleventh graders will take the SAT or ACT exam.

5. Each year in ninth grade, students will receive information about the school's high-quality pathways and programs of study that align to postsecondary programs and high-demand careers available to them.

6. Each year, students and parents will receive information about postsecondary and career options, preparation, and financing.

7. Each year, 30% of students will participate in a work-based learning opportunity.

8. All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.

9. All participating districts will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding high school pathways, scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.

10. Each year, Tri-agency partners (TEA, THECB and TWC) will convene quarterly to ensure alignment of statewide initiatives around college and career readiness.

11. Students will have access to a student-focused online resource to assist them in making informed decisions about their education and career pathway options.

12. Annually increase the number of educators, counselors, and community members that complete specialized college and career readiness training.

Federal Grant Requirements

Equitable Access and Participation

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Equitable Access and Participation.

This requirement does apply to this federally funded grant program.

Private Nonprofit School Participation

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Private Nonprofit School Participation.

This requirement does apply to this federally funded grant program.

Maintenance of Effort

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Maintenance of Effort.

This requirement does apply to this federally funded grant program.

Attachments

There are two types of attachments that may be required to be submitted with your application:

Required Fiscal-Related Attachments

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Fiscal-Related Documentation Required to Be on File, for a general description of fiscal-related documents that can be required as attachments to the application.

Required Program-Related Attachments

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Required Program-Related Attachments, for a general description of program-related documents that can be required as attachments to the application.

No program-related attachments are required for this grant program.